

Bandwagon

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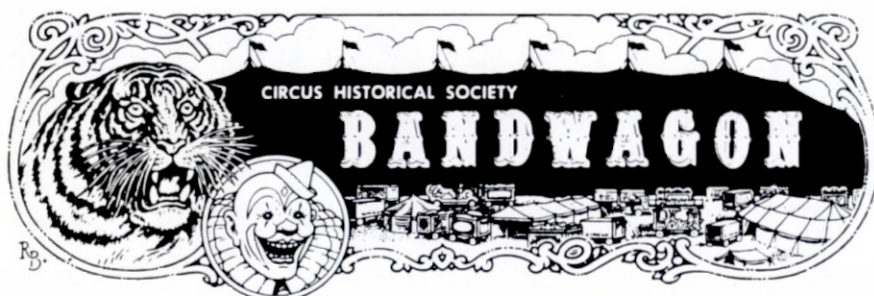
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MARCH-APRIL 1978



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The long awaited third unit of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus appeared at the Ohio State Fair, Columbus, August 22 through 28, 1977.

The poster appearing on our cover was prepared especially for this one stand. The special artwork done in full color was printed as a window card, as well as a half sheet. The Wallendas and the two Zacchini cannons were featured.

There appear to be no plans for future engagements of the Ringling-Barnum Thrill Circus.

NEW MEMBERS

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3679 Stewart Road
Doraville, Georgia 30340

Paul A. Ruddell #65 (Reinstated)
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Ronald N. Batts #2385
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Tullahoma, Tenn. 37388

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Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604

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Fargo, North Dakota 58102

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Oak Lawn, Illinois 60453

Robert William Larson #2395
10001-36th. Place No.
Plymouth, Minnesota 55441

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by Stuart Thayer

For the last four years the author has been visiting libraries (fifty-six of them) and reading newspapers (80,000 of them) in an attempt to chronicle the earliest days of the circus in America. This book is offered as a result of that effort and is the most complete record compiled to date. Every act, every performer, every stand and every newspaper review he found is here. Most of the companies listed have never had their names published before; most of the performers in this book are unknown to circus historians. The index contains over four hundred-fifty performers' names. You will find here the first combination of circus and menagerie; the first bareback rider in America; the first use of the canvas tent and many other innovative events in the history of the circus.

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Karl Wallenda Dies in Fall

Karl Wallenda, patriarch of the Great Wallendas, fell 10 stories to his death from a wire stretched between two hotels in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on March 22, 1978.

Wallenda was doing a promotional walk for the Jimmie Harrington Pan American Circus, where the high wire troupe was performing. Wallenda had made many such walks from very high distances at ball parks for the last few years, often appearing independent of the full act.

The Wallendas came to the United States in 1928 to appear with the Ringling-Barnum Circus. The act remained with the show for many years and returned to the big show after being away for a few years. In 1977 Karl Wallenda with his full act was featured with the Ringling-Barnum Thrill Circus at the Ohio State Fair, Columbus. Less than a month prior to his death a special movie appeared on television that dramatized the Wallendas famous seven man high pyramid. A more detailed article on Karl Wallenda will appear in the May-June issue.

Karl Wallenda was born in Mannheim, Germany, in 1903, and began his career in 1923. In 1978, at age 73, he had been performing longer than any featured circus star in American circus history.

Wallenda was honored by the Circus Historical Society on two recent occasions. The cover of the January-February 1976 *BANDWAGON* featured a lithograph of the Wallendas while they were on the Greatest Show On Earth in the early 1930's. During the banquet of the CHS convention, held in Sarasota, Florida, in February 1977, Karl Wallenda was presented a modern art trophy depicting him doing a headstand on the high wire, honoring his many years as a center ring attraction.

HALL OF FAME AWARDS

The awards selection committee of the Circus Hall of Fame, Sarasota, Florida, met on February 3, 1978 and added four circus greats to the 103 already enshrined.

Equestrian Dorothy Herbert, who first gained fame in the mid 1930's with the Ringling Barnum Circus, was the only woman honored this year. She is now living in California. Gustino Loyal, bareback rider, is now living in Sarasota and is a key trainer in the Sarasota Sailor circus. Andre Atayde, who died in 1975, headed Mexico's largest circus, Atayde Bros., for many years.

The final award went to Terrell Jacobs, long considered one of America's two greatest wild animal trainers.

Mr. Loyal was the only recipient present to receive his award during a special performance of the Dubsky Bros. & Jordan Circus, the winter attraction of the Circus Hall of Fame.

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COLE BROS. CIRCUS

America's Favorite
Railroad Show

Season of 1944

by Joseph T. Bradbury

The winter of 1943-44 saw more activity in the Louisville quarters than any of the previous World War II years. The show undertook several new construction projects as well as doing the usual renovation and repainting of equipment. Although most materials were in scarce supply and it required going through government red tape to get them the show had lived through two full seasons under war time regulations and had established very good relations with the bureaucrats in charge and were thus able with a minimum of confusion acquire what was necessary to put everything in top

Photo No. 1 - Cole Bros. boxing horses one sheet upright with date tail for Columbus, Ohio, May 20-21, 1944. Color scheme had yellow background at top which merged to orange in center and red at bottom. Title was in red, horses and clowns white, and the circle mostly blue, all of which made for a very colorful litho. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.



notch shape for the coming 1944 season.

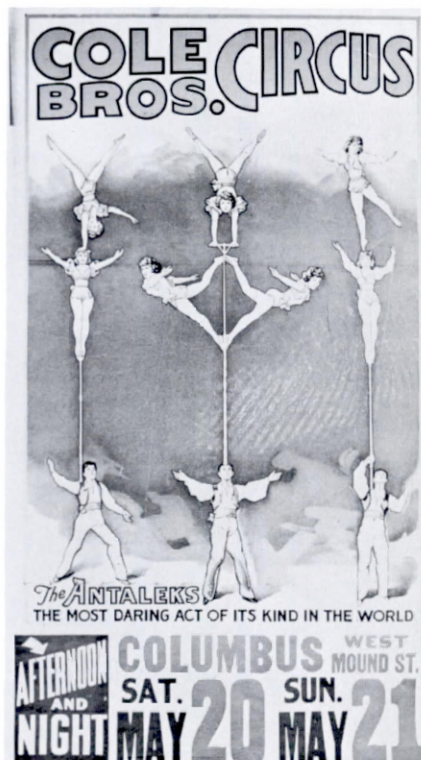
The Jan. 8, 1944 *Billboard* said that several Cole Bros. acts had recently played a number of dates during the holidays, including a unit of dogs, monkeys, seals, and ponies at the Municipal Auditorium in Louisville for a benefit for soldiers at nearby Ft. Knox. Fuzz Plunkett had a trained dog act that appeared at the YMCA and then moved on to Ft. Knox for another soldier benefit show. Trainers at quarters were readying horses and elephants for the winter circus dates promoted by Orrin Davenport which Cole had played for the last several seasons. The first shipment of animals and equipment was scheduled to leave January 22 for Grand Rapids, Mich. and this unit would be joined by additional stock for the Cleveland date. Eddie Woekener had been rehired as bandleader and this advertisement appeared in the issue—"Musicians Wanted 1944 Season by Cole Bros. Circus. Opening early and closing late. Musicians must be strictly sober and reliable, union, and have a paid up card. Apply to Eddie Woekener, P.O. Box 250, Peru, Ind."

The Jan. 15, 1944 *Billboard* said that the Cole shops began work on January 1, pausing only long enough to consume a turkey dinner by chef Elmer Voris. One crew under direction of Jack Bigger is putting the finishing touches on the new ring barn in the group of buildings started last fall. Charlie Luckie's crew is building an all new grandstand and blue seats, the stringers to be 3 rows higher than last year, thus increasing the total seating capacity of the big top. Wagon repair work began January 3 and the train was sent to the K & I Railroad shops for a thorough overhauling. A large brick building about five blocks from the main quarters is being readied to serve as a paint shop and the wardrobe department is in operation in a building three blocks away. It appears it was necessary to put into use several buildings on a temporary basis until the complete new quarters complex was finished. It may be recalled from the last installment that the Army had taken over all of the regular Kentucky State Fairgrounds buildings making it necessary for the show to construct its

own on land adjacent to the main part of the grounds. The article went on to say that the zoo was open on Sundays and holidays and was attracting more cash customers than ever before. There were hundreds of patrons recently despite inclement weather. The zoo was being publicized by way of Col. Harry Thomas' 15 minute programs broadcast three times weekly.

In mid January Zack Terrell journeyed to Washington, D.C. to confer with Office of Defense Transportation (ODT) officials on plans for movement of the Cole train in 1944 and also with Treasury Department personnel on the show's bond sale program. While in the nation's capital Terrell and his wife entertained a group of

Photo No. 3 - One sheet upright for the Antaleks was posted at Columbus, Ohio. Title is in red on cream and blue background. Performer's costumes have red pants and yellow shirts. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.



COLE BROS. CIRCUS



BETTY LOU FORMER STAR OF TARZAN PICTURES
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Photo No. 5 - Cole Bros. one sheet flat advertising Betty Lou, chimpanzee, had yellow title on cream background. The animal is brown and date tail is for Madison, Wis., June 29, 1944. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

prominent Indiana newspaper men and government officials at dinner at the Hotel Statler one evening. Terrell returned to Louisville a week later and announced the show had been given the green light for the coming season by both the ODT and treasury.

The Jan. 29, 1944 *Billboard* said that attendance at the quarter's zoo had broken all records the previous Sunday with more than 1,000 cash customers between the hours of 1 and 5. Other notes said that Paul Nelson, John Smith, and Mahlon Campbell were working out new routines for the liberty horse acts. Nelson was breaking 6 new Palamino stallions for his center ring display. Eugene Scott was working the elephants and Melvin Plunkett had 6 new seals in his school and plans have been made for the seal display to be working in all three rings during the coming season. Supt. Jack Bigger and crew has finished the new ring barn which is constructed of brick and cement, and contains 2 rings for training purposes and has stalls for 60 horses. Charlie Luckie's crew has already turned out more than a dozen wagons from the repair shops and Orville (Curly) Stewart will open the paint shop next week. The unit going to Grand Rapids for the indoor date has Eugene Scott in charge of the elephants and John McGraw the ring stock. The show ran a number of advertisements in the *Billboard*, this one in the Jan. 22 issue—"Wanted for Cole Bros. Circus Billers and Billposters.", and in the Jan. 29 issue, the show wanted sideshow musicians and wild west people.

First details of the new spec came in the Feb. 12 1944 *Billboard* which said that Mr. and Mrs. Terrell have returned to Louisville after a trip to New York City and Chicago where they purchased some new costumes for a lavish spec to be produced by Harry Thomas and titled, "The Castle of Taj Mahal", which will be preceded by a tournament depicting the Allied Nations. A miniature castle is being constructed by Reinhart, illusionist. The Courtney School will produce the dance numbers. Other notes said there had been quite warm weather at quarters lately and more than 1,500 visited the zoo on January 30. The second shipment of stock left February 8 enroute to the Cleveland Grotto Circus date produced by Orrin Davenport.

The following week the *Billboard* gave a progress report on the Cole shop activity, mentioning that the new seats were coming along on schedule and said again that the total seating capacity would be increased but no actual figures given. Two-thirds of the cages and baggage wagons have been through the repair shops and were now at the paint department. Work was being done on several of the show's stock cars.

Another shop report came in the March 18, 1944 *Billboard*. The quarters were said to be humming, opening date had been set for April 20 and department heads were arriving early. H.C. (Whitey) Warren, assistant to Jack Bigger, had a crew of 20 working on the coaches and flats which were now back from the K & I Railroad shops. Yellow Burnett was working in the paint shops. Repair work on the wagons was about complete and plans were made to start building a new red ticket wagon right away, as well as several new seat wagons. The new ticket wagon was built from the ground up as shown in Photo No. 12. It had the appearance more of a trailer than a wagon as there was no footboard, hand or foot brake on top and no steps leading to the top. It had only a short lead pole and the vehicle was designed to be pulled by a truck or tractor. It is doubtful that any new seat wagons were built, in all probability they only underwent a remodeling process as did all of the wagons eventually during the 1940's. Other notes said that Floyd Lee, in charge of lights, has constructed a new lighting system for the big top, including 3 spot lights for each ring and a system of overhead lighting never before used on the show. A new public address system was also acquired. The report said a new color scheme would be used on the cages but no details were given. The baggage wagons would be painted as before, red with yellow wheels and gears, and white lettering.

In early April the *Billboard* said that the Cole show would feature a baby hippopotamus which would be the main attraction in the menagerie and



Photo No. 6 - This one sheet upright with a different chimpanzee design was posted at Williamsport, Pa., May 29, 1944. Kent Ghirard Collection.

that a name contest was being conducted by Harry Thomas over the local radio — the winner to be given a war bond and tickets to the opening performance. This appears to have been only a publicity gag as there is no evidence the show got a new baby hippo. The "baby" was in all probability the same young hippo which was purchased in the spring of 1943 from the Cincinnati zoo. The animal would now be about 2 years old, far from grown, and could be considered a baby — at least for publicity purposes. Other notes in the article said that spec costumes had been completed by Mathieu of New York City and Lanquay of Chicago. Two sets of ballet girls would be used, one group representing Spanish dancers the other, Oriental. There will be magical effects in the spec with girls coming out of thin air, created by Marquis the Magician in collaboration with Reinhart, illusionist.

The April 22, 1944 *Billboard* gave the final news of preparations for the new season, which was to open April 20 in Louisville with 2 performances scheduled for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and a matinee only on Sunday, April 20-23. First road stand would be at Owensboro, Ky., and the advertising car with Verne Williams in charge left to bill that city on April 8. The new red ticket wagon was being completed and quantities of Lesterlite paint were to be used for the spec and other displays. The show hoped to set a record for the sale of war bonds at the opening. The local bond drive opened

COLE BROS. CIRCUS



LEE ROSE McADAMS
ONE OF THE MANY FIVE GAITED COLE BROS. CHAMPIONS

Photo No. 7 - Cole Bros. one sheet upright advertising Lee Rose McAdams, famous five gaited horse, was used in 1944. Color scheme has red title on yellow background with black horse and rainbow bullseye. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

April 15 with the reserve seat ticket wagon parked down town. A section of 192 seats would be reserved for bond purchasers throughout the season, seats graded best would go to buyers of 5 G's and rangin on down town.s throughout the season, seats graded best would go to buyers of 5 G's and ranging on down to the 18.75 type. The zoo had drawn more during the past winter than ever before. Strangely enough the show's labor situation at present was excellent with more help on hand for the season's start than in the last few years. Unfortunately, this wouldn't last long and the show would be hurting for workmen before long. Biggest news around the front office was that Noyelles Burkhart, who had been in charge of the front door last season, was now general manager.

The 1944 Cole Bros. train had 25 cars, which included 1 advance, 4 stocks, 12 flats, and 8 coaches, the same number used the previous season. Color scheme was red with title in white for the coaches, flats were yellow with title in a dark blue-black, and stocks yellow with title in same color on a blue-black letterboard.

Unfortunately, Gordon Potter, who has furnished so much detailed information on the shows' 1941, 42, and 43 seasons did not catch the show in 1944 and we don't have the benefit of his notes, but from photos and other accounts it appears the physical equipment was pretty much the same as

during the previous seasons with exceptions as noted in this article. It appears the show carried the same 10 cages as per the 1943 list and animal lineup essentially the same. Also on the show was the Columbia tableau, used as the reserve seat ticket wagon as in the past, and the two pony floats, Old Woman in Shoe and Mother Goose.

The late Bill Woodcock, Sr., who was on the show for part of the 1944 season, provided the following listing of elephants to Chang Reynolds some years ago.

1. Tony (executed while on tour late in season)
2. Big Babe
3. Carrie
4. Louie
5. Jean
6. Little Jenny
7. Nellie
8. Tessie
9. Wilma
10. Blanche
11. Big Jennie
12. Little Babe
13. Trilby
14. Kate

Woodcock said the show toured most of the season with 14 elephants but returned to quarters with 13 due to execution of Tony, a tough female late in the season.

Total number of horses and other lead stock was essentially the same as carried in 1943. Likewise total number of wagons, cages, tractors etc. remained the same.

According to reports in the *Billboard* the show did have a larger big top, a 145 ft. round with three 50's, the size increase being necessary to accommodate the enlarged seating capacity. Although no details were given the big top was again made of blue canvas and probably came from O'Henry. The first blue colored big top acquired in 1941 was used two full seasons, however,

Photo No. 9 - Closing spec presented by Cole Bros. in 1944 featured huge U.S. flags and personnel dressed in uniforms of the armed services. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.



THE GREAT GRIMES
UNDISPUTED CHAMPIONS OF THE HIGH WIRE, WHO HAVE MADE TWO CONTINENTS GASP

Photo No. 8 - This Cole Bros. one sheet flat posted at Madison, Wis., June 29, 1944 featuring a high wire act by name of The Great Grimes is a most interesting litho. Actually there was no act by this name on Cole Bros. in 1944 nor at any time. The sheet was designed in 1938 for the Gretonas, high wire act, which was on the show that season. After the act left, the wording was changed from Gretonas to Great Grimes and the show continued to use the sheet presumably until the supply was exhausted. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

the new one purchased in the spring of 1943 was pretty well wrecked in the hurricane which hit the show while on the lot in Galveston, Texas, that fall. Photos taken in 1944 indicate that many of the other tops were quite worn and patched up considerably giving rise to the belief they had been in use two (possibly more) seasons. Canvas was still a very critical item and it was virtually impossible for a show to acquire a complete new spread of tents each year as some shows did before World War II.

The 1944 season was now at hand. Big news was that for the first time since 1939 there would be 3 railroad shows on the road. Dailey Bros., owned by Ben Davenport, which had been a successful medium sized motorized show for the past few seasons was going out on 10 railroad cars. Ringling-Barnum's train was reduced to 69 cars and Cole would go as usual on 25.

The war news in the spring of 1944 was generally good with the entire free world anxiously awaiting the Allied invasion of Europe which was sure to come within a few weeks. Rationing had reached its peak as well as war-

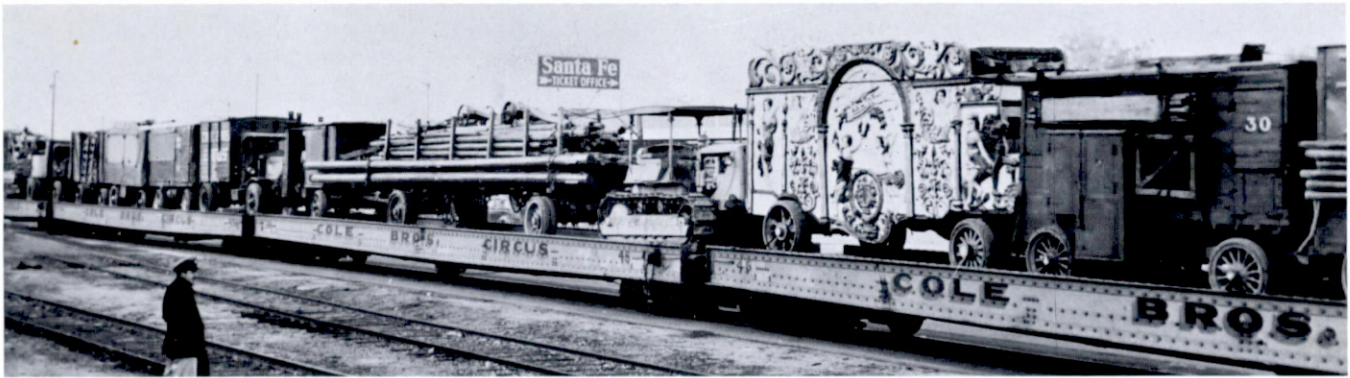


Photo No. 10 - Cole Bros. loaded flat cars, season of 1944. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

time controls on just about everything. The draft had now reached practically into every home in the country. Industry was at its peak with munition plants, shipyards, and other vital plants working around the clock. Hundreds of military installations were in operation around the country with troop trains continually on the move shuffling personnel between the camps or to the ports for overseas shipment. The civilians as well as the soldiers back home had money in their pockets and were still extremely amusement hungry. The result was that all kinds of show business prospered. Many people who never knew what the income tax was, were not paying it, and friendly old Uncle Sam was taking his cut out of just about everything a person could buy and he hit amusements for a whopping 20 percent bite, but despite all this people still spent and spent heavily for amusement. Showmen knew this and every able bodied circus man who hadn't been drafted himself was getting into the business. Trouping dur-

Photo No. 4 - One sheet flat for the Famous Nelson Family posted at Columbus, Ohio, had red and yellow title with gray-green canvas background. Stage is red. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

ing the last full year of World War II was going to be tough but there was money to be made.

The April 29, 1944 *Billboard* told the story of the Cole opening in headlines, "COLE BOND BOW CLICKS. Louisville record gross scored. Timing smooth. Securities sell out." The article went on to say that the show drew the biggest opening day crowd grosses ever recorded. Big top with capacity of 8,500 was half filled for the matinee when the weather was drizzling during the afternoon. The evening was chilly and show played to three-fourths capacity. The war bond section of 192 seats sold out for all 7 performances. The time of the show had been cut to 2 hours and 28 minutes by Friday's matinee. Prices for the engagement were 1.20 for general admission and 2.05 for reserve seats. Freddie Freeman, who appears in a feature bareback riding act, was kicked by a horse and put out of the program for about a week. No bones were broken but he sustained severe leg bruises.

A new addition, Senorita Carrillo, "Queen of the Bounding Wire" received a foot injury and Ring 2 during the

act of Mexican wire stars was empty. She is expected to be out for two weeks. Top act is Con Colleano, tight wire, whose specialty is the forward somersault. Second feature is the Great Antaleks, high perch act. Other main attractions are the opening spec, "The Castle of Taj Mahal", elephant ballet presented by Jean Allen, Helen Scott, and Marion Knowlton; high trapeze and rope act by Ruth Nelson; Joe Hodgini Family of bareback riders; waltzing and rearing horses under girl riders featuring Jean Allen; the Slayman-Ali Arab Pyramid Troupe; Flying Thrillers, aerialists, and the closing spec, Old Glory. The same issue had this advertisement, "Wanted for Cole Bros. Circus. Workingmen and assistant bosses for all departments. Top Salaries. Contact as per route."

The following week *The Billboard* said the show had well attended performances during the opening run in Louisville and at the conclusion the time of the show was down to 2 hours and 15 minutes and running very smoothly. The complete performance was reviewed as follows.

Photo No. 11 - Cole Bros. baggage wagon mired in mud on lot at Decatur, Ill., April 27, 1944. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.





Photo No. 12 - New red ticket wagon, No. 63, built for Cole Bros. at the Louisville winterquarters shops during winter of 1943-44. It is shown here on



Photo No. 13 - Mack truck and caterpillar tractor pulling wagons on the lot at LaCross, Wis., June 30, 1944. Photo by W. A. Uthmeier.

Cole Bros. 1944 Program.

1. Opening spec, The Castle of Taj Mahal, uses 2 sets of chorus girls, one group representing Oriental, the other Spanish dancers. Costumes are the most lavish of the production. Whole effect is gorgeous pageantry which sets a mark the rest of the circus has difficulty keeping up with. With apparatus and ideas supplied by Marquis, magician, the feature number of the spec is the magical effects in the production of a dancer out of the air. It starts with an eye-filling walkaround with elephants and girls.

2. The Patterson Troupe, somersaulting act on trampoline.

3. Clown walk-around with Aunt Matilda, hind leg walking and dancing pony.

4. Gymnastic act on aerial bars with comic angle. The Voise and Harold troupes in Rings 1 and 3.

5. Human Pendulum, Ruth Nelson, high wire.

6. Con Colleano, somersaulting star of the tight wire, with forward somersault as specialty. The show's top act, Colleano had the customers holding their breath every minute of the performance.

7. Elephants with girl trainers and ballerinas under direction of Eugene Scott.

Ring 1 - Helen Scott

Ring 2 - Jean Allen

Ring 3 - Marion Knowlton. Hop scotch "Ballet of Elephants" on track.

8. Bareback Number.

Ring 1 - The Reiffenachs

Ring 2 - The Hodgins

Ring 3 - The Freemans

9. Trained Sea Lions.

Ring 1 - presented by Jean Allen

Ring 2 - bareback seal by Paul Nelson, unusual and effective act.

Ring 3 - presented by Marion Knowlton, all under direction of Capt. Melvin Plunkett.

10. After-show introduction with Col. Hank Linton and cowboys and cowgirls.

the lot, season of 1944. Note there is no seat or hand brake on top, footboard, or ladder. Photo by William Koford (Al Conover Collection).

11. Aerial Ballet with Ruth Nelson in Ring 2 and girls on high swinging anchors, Muscle grinds, cloud swings, and swinging trapeze. Featured performers are Carmen and Bert Dearo and Senorita Celo Corillo. Jan Sidney, soloist, sings. Staged by Paul Nelson.

12. Horses, three and five gaited horses in exhibition.

13. Clowns, Burlesque wedding.

14. Horses, 16 horse hitch of Palamino stallions driven by Georgia Sweet. (This was not in the opening day shows, and hitch broke spoiling the effect when presented April 21).

15. Living art creations, depicting paintings of old masters in rings using Lesterlite.

16. Clown walkaround.

17. Bareback riding, featuring Joe Hodgini Family.

18. After show re-introduction with Hank Linton, and Whitey Govro, wrestler.

19. Tight and Bounding Wire with Mexican Girls.

Ring 1 - The Cardenos

Ring 2 - Senorita Celo Corillo

Ring 3 - The Caudillos

20. High school horses, featuring girl riders, Jean Allen, Ruth Nelson, with Marion Knowlton, Georgia Sweet, Helen Scott, Bobby Peck, Nena Thomas, Helen Portello, Golda Grady, Josephine Cofield, Ethel Freeman, Virginia Tiffany, Cora Linton, Vicki Kernan (3 rings and hippodrome).

21. High Perch, featuring the Great Antaleks in center ring.

22. Clowns.

23. Pyramid Act, featuring the Slayman-Ali Troupe of 6 Arabs in center ring. In Ring 1, Virginia Tiffany, Bert Dearo; Ring 3 - Caudillo Sisters.

24. Liberty Horses, presented by:

Ring 1 - Capt. John Smith

Ring 2 - Paul Nelson

Ring 3 - Mahlon Campbell

25. Clown walk-around.

26. Aerialists, The Flying Thrillers, featuring double-somersault and half

twister, while blindfolded.

27. Horse Races, Shetland ponies with monkey riders, pony versus horse and rider; Roman standing race.

28. Clown walkaround.

29. Boxing horses.

30. Closing spec, Old Glory, with Jan Sidney, soloist.

The aftershow included Col. Hank Linton, Pard Ingle, Madge Riley, Cora Linton, May Lytel, Joe Robertson, Alma Sutton, Beth Browning, the Rubon Cossack Troupe, and Whitey Govro, wrestler.

The sideshow with Arthur Hoffman, manager, had the following attractions; Frances O'Connor, armless wonder; Rose Westlake, Physical Marvel; Neal Johnson, bat manipulator; Duke Kamukua and Hawaiian entertainers; Mlle. Lethea, swordswallower; Senor Lopez, accompanist and rhumba dancers; Harry Langford's 20 colored entertainers; Bamboola and family, pigmy fire worshippers; Betty Broadbent, tattooed lady; Charles Roark, English puppets and inside lecturer; Abner Plunkoff, comedy juggler; Mrs. Charles Roark, lightning chalk artist; Marvin Smith, anatomical wonder; Goldie Fitts, indestructible girl; Leandro Del Castillo, comedy musical novelty; Myrna Karsey, snakes.

The 1944 Cole Bros. Staff and Department Heads Roster.

(Executive Staff) Zack Terrell, President; Noyelles Burkhart, general manager; J.D. Newman, general agent and traffic manager; Fred E. Schortemeier, general counsel; Joe Haworth, legal adjuster; Robert DeLochte, treasurer; Lorne M. Russell, auditor; H.E. Leeman, timekeeper. (Press Staff) Ora O. Parks, Edward Johnson, Frank J. Lee, Jack Grimes, C.S. Primrose, Col. Harry Thomas, radio.

(Department Heads) W.H. (Bill) Curtis, general superintendent; Richard O. Scatterday, national advertising representative; Col. Harry Thomas.

producer, director of performer personnel; Orville Stewart, master of transportation; Harry McFarlan, equestrian director; Arthur Hoffman, manager, sideshow; Cecil LaBelle, supt. front door; Paul Nelson, asst. equestrian director; Eugene Scott, supt. of menagerie; Gene Weeks, supt. concessions; Floyd Lee, supt. illumination; Mahlon Campbell, supt. ring stock; Jack Bigger, trainmaster; Edward Longodore, supt. of properties; Walter Rice, supt. public address; Verne A. Williams, manager advertising car No. 1; Eddie Woeckener, bandmaster.

The first road date at Owensboro, Ky., April 24, did turnaway business and the show moved into Indiana for two days in Evansville which saw capacity houses. Next the show went into Illinois where it was scheduled to play Decatur, April 27, the first railroad circus in that city since 1940. The Decatur stand had all kinds of difficulties. First, a flat car buckled in the middle while passing through Mattoon, Ill., and this delayed the train for several hours. The damaged flat had to be unloaded and two system car replacements were sent in from Decatur. The train didn't arrive in Decatur until 1:15 p.m. and the first wagon reached the lot at 2:30, only to be mired in the mud. Several wagons became stuck in the muddy conditions until it was realized that the lot entrance had been made at the lowest point where considerable water had drained. Using higher ground at the other end of the lot the show was able to set up with the menagerie tent going in the air about 4:45. The matinee performance due to the lateness of the hour had to be cancelled, however, the night show went on as scheduled playing before a turnaway crowd. During the teardown one of the light plants became stuck in the mud so badly that a crew tried to pull it out with 2 Caterpillars but the toe chains broke. It was only after extreme difficulty that

the wagon was finally moved from the lot. Bob Parkinson was a visitor during the rough day at Decatur. When the show arrived in Springfield, Ill., for the following day's stand it was discovered that over 100 stakes had been left on the Decatur lot, so new ones had to be obtained immediately from a Springfield lumber firm. The crowd in Springfield was believed to be the largest attending any circus in that city within the last 20 years. More than 9,000 crowded into the big top for one performance and considerable adverse comment was heard over the lack of adequate seating and the show's placing of patrons on canvas or straw spread down on the hippodrome track. The local press noted that the labor shortage on the show was so tight in the city that a crew of 65 boys from nearby Lamphier High School were released from studies to help set up seats during the afternoon before the matinee. It was also observed there was a shortage of well trained help in the rings to set up and dismantle the various props but that the public understood the situation and there was no displeasure over the difficulties and delays.

Business was very good during the first days of the new season. At Bloomington, Ill., April 29, there were two straw houses, a big straw matinee at Danville the following day, and more good business at LaFayette, Ind. May 1 despite an abundance of rain and mud. So bad were weather conditions in LaFayette, Freddie Freeman wrote in his *Billboard* column that the lot was half under water. Ft. Wayne and Muncie, Indiana, gave full houses and then the show moved on to Indianapolis for a four day engagement, May 4-7. The show played two more dates in Indiana, Anderson and Richmond, then moved into Ohio, May 10, at Hamilton which was followed by four days in Cincinnati, May 11-14.

The *Billboard* sent a reporter to visit the show while in Cincy and his account appeared in the May 20, 1944 issue. He wrote that the opener in the city had been light but that preceding dates had turned out with heavy gates. The show was set up on the Cum-

minsville lot. First matinee started one half hour late to a half house but at night the tent was two-thirds filled. Weather was nice. Con Colleano fell from the wire at the initial matinee and was considerably shaken up. In Hamilton, Ohio, there was a capacity matinee and straw night house. Richmond, Ind., May 9, gave very good business as did Anderson. In Indianapolis where the bond sale hit the 100 G's mark the first matinee had a three-quarters house despite inclement weather. The Indianapolis stand was under auspices of the 11th District American Legion and all bond seats were sold out in advance. Friday's matinee attendance improved and at night there was a turnaway. Jean Allen was thrown from her horse, Amber King, Friday night but was not seriously injured and remained in the show. Saturday's business was also very heavy. On Sunday there was excellent attendance despite the cool and cloudy weather. It was noted the performance now ran 2 hours and 3 minutes. Total attendance in Indianapolis was tagged at 40,000 which was considered good. Sideshow and concessions reported grosses in excess of former years.

A week later the *Billboard* gave the details of the entire Cincy stand, saying second day's matinee was fair with a good night house. Third day matinee crowd was stronger than the previous ones and at night the tent was nearly filled. Final day saw the matinee full and three-fourths house at night. There was good weather throughout.

Following Cincinnati Cole remained in Ohio playing Middletown the next day, followed by two days each in Dayton, Springfield, and Columbus. Final date in the state was at Zanesville, May 23.

The May 27, 1944 *Billboard* had an article summarizing circus business

Photo No. 15 - Lead stock tied to canvas wagons No. 87 and 88 on Cole Bros. lot at LaCross, Wis., June 30, 1944. These wagons were formerly used on the Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto Circus and were acquired by Cole Bros. in the spring of 1940. Photo by W.A. Uthmeier.

Photo No. 14 - Unloading the big top canvas by manpower on Cole Bros. lot at LaCross, Wis., June 30, 1944. Photo by W.A. Uthmeier.





Photo No. 17 - Part of the Cole Bros. elephant herd on the lot at Long Beach, Calif., Sept. 18-19, 1944. Left to right are John Smith, Roy Hoffman, Garnett 'Bud' Sims, N. Barnhoff, Eugene 'Arky' Scott (with helmet and boots), Bill Woodcock, Sr., Slim Coster, and two more unidentified handlers. Bill Cox is behind Arky Scott and cannot be seen. He worked old Blanche for years. Photo by Harry Quillen (Bud Sims Collection).

so far in the season which was headed, "Outdoor Big Tops. New Peak. Big Tops Using Straw". It went on to say that Ringling-Barnum had a strong run in New York City and Cole Bros. had been "garnishing the shekels". The new railer, Dailey Bros., after a great tour of Texas was now doing well in Kansas. Out on the West Coast Beatty-Russell and Arthur Bros. were doing business, and other shows about the nation which were scoring were Bud Anderson, Bailey Bros., Kelly-Miller, and Mills Bros. Only sour note was that Cronin Circus closed and returned to its Baldwin Park, Calif., quarters.

Another article in the same issue said that the two day stand in Dayton, Ohio, May 16-17, was not so good for Cole Bros. The night performances drew about 5,000 while the matinees attendance were best described as miserable. The show's management said the town would become a one day stand in the future. Weather generally was fine except for a sudden thunder shower and rain storm which hit the second night just as the spec was finished. The band blared its loudest to drown out the elements as the performance continued without interruption. Con Colleano still suffering from his recent injury did not appear at any performance. Despite the low take in Dayton, Ohio generally had been good to the show. Springfield, May 18-19, saw a near capacity at the first matinee and good attendance at the other 3 performances. Arthur Hoffman said that Sunday, May 14, in Cincinnati, was the biggest day the sideshow ever had in that city. In Middletown, Ohio, the show arrived early and the matinee started on time with schools closed for the day. The matinee crowd was strawed to the ring curbs and at night the patrons were seated on the straw at both ends in front of the blues. Con

Colleano did appear in Middletown but had to lay off at other stands.

The injury bug had hit many Cole performers and Freddy Freeman wrote in his column that there had been 3 accidents recently. In addition to Con Colleano's fall, Ruth Nelson's horse had fallen with her and she was badly bruised, and Joe Hodgini had fallen and wrenched his knee.

After Ohio the show played a single stand in West Virginia, Wheeling, May 23, then moved into Pennsylvania at Butler which was followed by Greensburg, Johnstown, Altoona, Williamsport, and Scranton. The show next entered New York and played dates at Binghamton, Elmira, and Niagara Falls, before returning to the Keystone state for a date in Erie, June 5. It was back into New York at Jamestown the next day, which was followed by Meadville, Pa., June 7, and then it was westward for a second visit to Ohio.

The June 17, 1944 *Billboard* told the story of Cole's tour in recent days with headlines, "BIZ TERRIFIC FOR COLE IN PA." The article went on to say that the stand in Greensburg, Pa., May 25, was terrific with the matinee crowd on the straw to the ring curbs and an estimated 1,500 turned away at night. Johnstown, May 26, registered turnaways, and Altoona's business equalled that of the fine stand in that city of 1942. Sunday off in

Williamsport found the lot swarming with people all day. The matinee the next day saw the crowd jammed to the ring curbs and it was another turn-away at night. Arriving in Wilkes-Barre, Decoration Day, May 30, the show broke in a new lot in Kingston across the bridge from the city proper. The lot was small and show had difficulty in getting on but the wizardry of Bill Curtis accomplished the trick and the circus did the best business it had ever recorded in the city. Scranton, May 31, beat the previous Cole record of Decoration Day 1941. Binghamton and Elmira, New York, were good and at Niagara Falls the mob was packed again to the ring curbs and even Arthur Hoffman's sideshow had to hang out the "closed" sign 6 times. Sideshow has done great business the past 3 weeks. Regardless of labor shortages in some departments the show gets up and down in record time. For past 2 weeks the matinees have started on time with exception of Niagara Falls. The long haul there delayed the opening for 45 minutes. The show usually is off the lot at night and loaded by 1:30 a.m. Noyelles Burkhart, general manager, is on the lot early each morning and Zack Terrell sees it off at night.

Additional notes in the lengthy report said the show had also topped previous records in Erie. Harry Thomas was quoted that business to date has been more satisfactory, up almost 30 percent over last year. Sideshow take also has been good so far. Bert Dearo, aerialist, received a severe head injury several days ago when a hook fell from the rigging and lacerated his scalp, but he continued with his act. Marion Knowlton, who recently fell from an elephant while working her act, is continuing with a fractured ankle bone and a severe limp.

The show's second tour of Ohio began at Youngstown, June 8, with dates following at Canton, two days in Akron, Mansfield, and Lima. The show went into Michigan at Adrian, June 14, then played Monroe, Flint, Pontiac, Jackson, Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Kalamazoo, and Battle Creek.

The June 24, 1944 *Billboard* covered the Cole tour of Ohio and Michigan in a report with headlines, "Cole Houses Still Soaring. War Bond Sales in Nearly All Spots Top Those of 1943. Colleano is Okay." The article said there was a terrific rainstorm in Canton, Ohio, June 9, but the show still did big business. For 4 straight years Cole has encountered bad weather in Canton but this year the rain and blow held off until the night house was filled to capacity and on the straw. In 10 minutes the top was flooded with water but the performance continued under difficulties. At Akron, June 10-11, the show had its usual good run in the city. Cold weather cut the first matinee to about a half house but at night the crowd was on the straw. Sunday's take was extremely good. Mansfield, Ohio, June 12, was a good day as was Lima, which was passed up in 1943 because of a flooded lot. Bond sales most spots were usually higher than a year ago. The recent death of Jack Grimes cast sadness over the show. Ruth Nelson has recovered from her arm injury and is back doing the one arm planges, and Con Colleano is again doing his forward somersault. The Antalek's are breaking in 2 girls for an augmented number.

Other news coming in the trade publications said Monroe, Mich., had a light matinee but good night house and both Flint and Pontiac were tremendous days. Jackson, Mich., June 18, sponsored by the American Legion was bigger than any previous year on the hottest day so far in the season. The show weathered a terrific gale during the night performance, it taxing the skill of Cap Curtis and his crew to keep the big top in the air. Grand Rapids, June 19, turned out with good business and Muskegon was said to be the overall biggest cash day of all departments combined of any day so far in the season, beating the all time high set by Scranton earlier in the month. Kalamazoo also gave good business. Whitey Williams joined at Pontiac as boss property man, and Garnett "Bud" Sims joined the elephant department at Grand Rapids.

Following the Michigan tour the show went into Indiana for a two day stand in South Bend, June 23-24, then moved over into Illinois to play Elgin, Rockford, and Aurora. Next came two dates in Wisconsin, Madison, and LaCrosse. July 1 found the show in Minnesota at Winona, after which came three days in Minneapolis. While the show was in Minneapolis William H.

"Bill" Woodcock, Sr. joined the elephant department. Prior to then he had been with Terrell Jacobs' animal unit. Then came two days in St. Paul. The *Billboard* said the show arrived in Minneapolis in a heavy rainstorm but after the rains let up thousands went to the lot to watch the big top go up. Shortly afterwards the skies cleared

This 1944 Cole newspaper ad was used for the Waco, Texas, date. Pfening Collection.

WACO

MON. 16

OCT.

COTTON PALACE

CIRCUS GROUNDS

COLE BROS

CIRCUS

AMERICA'S FAVORITE SHOW

THE
GREATEST
PERFORMANCE
IN THE HISTORY
OF
COLE BROS.



COLORFULLY REDESIGNED FOR 1944
Stupendous Array of Amazing NEW FEATURES, Including
Georgious Opening SUPER-Spectacle

THE CASTLE OF

TAM MAHAL WITH HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE — ANIMALS
The MIGHTIEST Aggregation of WORLD-WIDE WONDERS Ever Presented At One Time
WORLD'S GREATEST STARS — including

CON COLLEANO

THE PEER OF ALL TIGHT WIRE ARTISTS
RETURN OF THE ORIGINAL

HODGINI FAMILY

BAREBACK RIDING MARVELS

BALLET OF THE ELEPHANTS

— THE GREAT —

ANTALEKS

HIGH PERCH STARS

HUGE RAILROAD SHOW—350 Aerial Stars — 3 Herds Elephants — 50 Clowns—250 Horses and Ponies — Big Double Menagerie

THE 7 FLYING THRILLERS

STARTLING NEW ARRAY OF HIPPODROME FEATURES

In view of the unprecedented seat demand for this year's circus (and the number of seats donated to buyers of War Bonds) circus patrons are urged to secure seat reservations in advance.

Afternoon at 3 o'clock and Night at 8 o'clock Daily

POPULAR PRICES

entirely and the show had big business during its three day stand, July 3-5. On Monday the matinee was capacity and crowd on straw at both ends of the oval at night. July 4 gave great business but the final day was only fair with a half house in the afternoon and three-fourths at night.

July 6, 1944 while Cole was in St. Paul, Ringling-Barnum was playing Hartford, Conn. and during the afternoon performance the big top was destroyed by fire in the greatest tragedy of its kind in circus history. The large number of deaths and injuries from the fire was appalling and cast a spell of gloom throughout the circus world. The news of the fire didn't adversely affect Cole's business in St. Paul but the tragedy set in motion a reaction all over the country and within a very short time, state, county, and local governments would come forth with new fire regulations, many of them unrealistically stringent which would make circus trouping under canvas very frustrating for the remainder of the 1944 season, in fact would make it extremely difficult for the next few seasons.

Following St. Paul the show played Brainerd and was scheduled to give performances the following day in Superior, Wis., but arriving in the city it was found that the lot was under water. A quick transfer to another lot was made but when the pole wagon rolled on it the vehicle sank to the hubs. It was then decided that the lot was in too poor condition to use so Manager Burkhart gave the order to reload the train and the show moved on to Duluth where it played July 10-11. A report in the trade publications said that Claire Levine recently joined doing menage and anchors in the aerial ballet. Also it was noted that Dorothy Lewis was now working elephants in Ring 1.

The July 22, 1944 said that a fierce reaction had set up after the Ringling-Barnum fire and that ordinances were popping up everywhere regarding the use of tents, fireproofing canvas, size and number of exits, and limitation of sale of tickets. The practice of selling as many tickets as possible and putting the overflow on straw or canvas spread down on the hippodrome track had come to an end in many locations because of new regulations. The same issue carried this advertisement. "Musicians Wanted for Cole Bros. Circus band for tour of west coast. Sober, reliable calliope player, saxophone, trumpet, or cornet, trombone, clarinet, bass or snare drum. Long season. Contact en route, Eddie Woekener, Musical Director."

The July 29, 1944 *Billboard* carried an article which quoted Tom Gregory, President of the Circus Fans Association, saying that restrictive laws recently passed in reaction to the



Ringling fire should not ban circuses, which some in effect would do. The same issue also carried a detailed account of Cole's recent tour of Minnesota and surrounding areas. It said that despite bad weather and muddy lots the show had been packing them in at nearly every Minnesota stand. A late arrival in Virginia and the terrible condition of the lot necessitated cancellation of the matinee but the night house was full. Hebbing, with the matinee only a half hour late, had two big houses. Bemidji gave the show the first dry lot in nearly 2 weeks with a capacity house at the matinee. It was quite exciting when a miniature tornado descended on the lot 30 minutes after the performance got underway. The cookhouse was blown down and a middle piece of the menagerie was ripped to shreds. When the big top quarter poles began to rise off the ground, Harry Thomas gave the crowd a quiet warning, requesting them to leave the tent orderly and wait outside until the storm had subsided. About half the people left while remainder stayed inside. The fury of the blow was spent in 10 minutes, then people returned and the show continued. The night house was capacity. North Forks, N.D. was also big. Moorhead, Minn., July 16, was a repetition of Kokomo, Ind., a year ago with the lot a real quagmire. However, two performances were given to a large turnout. Wagons were mired down to

Photo No. 16 - Part of the Cole Bros. elephant herd on the Hill and Washington Streets' lot, Los Angeles, Calif. Sept. 1-17, 1944. Elephant boss, Eugene "Arky" Scott is at extreme left and Garnett "Bud" Sims stands behind the "X". Menagerie tent is in rear. Photo by Harry Quillen (Bud Sims Collection).

the beds and the show didn't get off the lot until 8:15 the following morning. Performers worked shoulder to shoulder with workmen. Two caterpillars were used to get each wagon off the lot and Eugene Scott's elephants worked in the mud to their bellies assisting the tractors. The show consequently arrived late in St. Cloud but was greeted to a dry lot and thousands of towners who had waited for the arrival of the train. The matinee was cancelled but night house full. The report noted that the show was clicking in this territory and getting fine afternotices in the local newspapers. A note mentioned that the entire personnel were still shocked over the Ringling disaster and that fire prevention measures were being taken, including 50 small fire extinguishers being placed at advantageous points in the big top each day and 4 Mack Tank trucks parked around the tent fully

Photo No. 19 - Billing covering entire side of a building advertises Cole Bros. stand at McCook, Neb., July 29, 1944. Photo by Joe Fleming.



manned during each performance. No smoking is allowed in the big top at anytime and employees as well as customers are obeying the rules of the letter.

After Minnesota came a short tour of Iowa. Mason City was the initial stand which was followed by two days in Des Moines, then after a Sunday run, played two days in Omaha, which was followed by other Nebraska dates at Lincoln, Grand Island, Hastings, and McCook as the show moved westward rapidly.

The Aug. 5, 1944 *Billboard* mentioned that the show had good business in Iowa. The first matinee in Des Moines was light but for the remaining three performances the big top was packed to capacity. It appeared the Ringling fire scare had little effect on attendance due partly to advance publicity. A front page story in the local press the day before explained the safety measures the Cole management had taken in fire prevention. The state fire marshal also publicly praised the show in carrying out all of the safety measures he had ordered. Final note said the sideshow grossed 1,000 more the first day than it had in Des Moines a year ago.

The August 12, 1944 *Billboard* said Cole Bros. had been doing well of late. After leaving the bad weather and muddy lots in Minnesota the show had a good day in Omaha in spite of a big storm. Freddie Freeman wrote that the backyard the following day was the biggest laundry one ever saw as all trunks on both sides of the dressing room had been under water. In Lincoln, Nebraska, the show registered two straw houses and also played to capacity houses at Grand Island and Hastings. At McCook, Neb., July 29, the show had a half house at the matinee and better than three-quarters at night. (CHS Joe Fleming of Trenton, Neb., was on hand during the show's stand at McCook and furnished a number of fine photographs he took that day, several of which are printed here). The *Billboard* article went on to mention that the Burlington gave the show a good run from McCook to Denver where the show played 4 days, July 31-August 1-3. The run covered the 255 miles in 7 hours. Curly Stewart was waiting on the lot in Denver with flameproofing materials and Sunday was spent flameproofing all canvas. It was noted that most western cities had recently enacted tough fire regulations as regards circuses. Foremost is that there be 4 exits in the big top, however, Cole maintains 6. No smoking regulations are strictly enforced by the show's management and this plus other measures have brought compliments from local fire chiefs.

The first day in Denver was somewhat light which was probably due to the fire scare but final days saw

matinees about three-fourths with some full houses at night. The show's press department followed its now standard procedure of trying to minimize the effects of the Ringling fire with much publicity of its own safety precautions. Sideshow business in Denver fluctuated with that of the big top.

After Denver the show continued in Colorado playing stands at Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and Longmont, then went north to Wyoming and was at Cheyenne, August 7. It was eastward back to Nebraska for dates at Sidney and Scottsbluff, then the show returned to Wyoming to play Casper and an evening only stand at Worland, August 11. The next day Cole moved into Montana for engagements at Laurel, Lewiston, Great Falls, Helena, Butte, and Dillon, then over into Idaho Falls and Pocatello. A Sunday run took the show to Salt Lake City, Utah, for two days, August 21-22.

The Sept. 2, 1944 *Billboard* covered the Cole tour from Denver to Salt Lake and the article noted that as the show penetrated further west fire regulations seemed to become more strict but that business continued to be big. Idaho Falls saw two capacity houses and Pocatello had a full matinee and overflow at night. The Sunday off in Salt Lake City saw the show meet with the most rigid city ordinances yet, ordinances enacted a week before the circus' arrival. It could not be set up without again flameproofing the canvas. Wider aisles were ordered and reserve seat chairs had to be bolted down to the biblebacks. When the show played Dillon, Mont., August 17, for a matinee only stand, the grave and monument to old Pitt, the last of the John Robinson elephants, which was struck by lightning and killed a year ago when Cole Bros. played the city, was the mecca of showfolk all day. Col. Harry Thomas rendered a short service at the grave and pictures were made of the monument erected by Zack Terrell. The show's elephant, Blanche, stood at the grave and muttered wierd trumpetings. When the show played Casper, Wyo., August 10, a terrific windstorm hit as the big top was going up but the show still did good business at both performances. The two day stand in Salt Lake City saw blistering heat, 94 degrees at each matinee which held attendance down but the entire showing was termed better than satisfactory as the evening houses were packed and better than half houses each afternoon. Arthur Bros. had played the city on August 1 but this failed to affect Cole's business adversely.

After Salt Lake the show played Ogden, Utah, August 23, then took the next day to make a 540 mile run over the Southern Pacific to Reno, Nev.

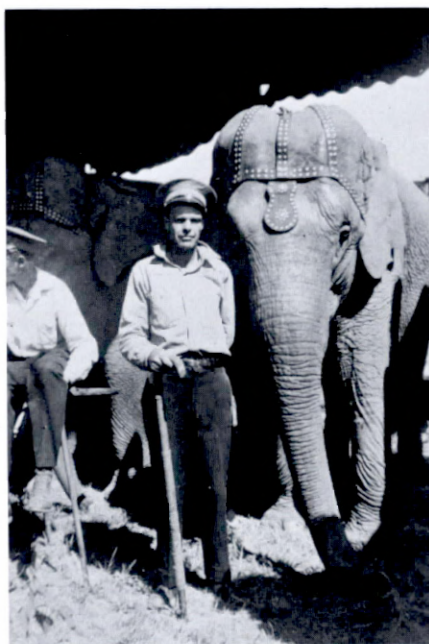


Photo No. 20 - Cole Bros. big top on lot at McCook, Neb., July 29, 1944. Photo by Joe Fleming.

where two performances were given on the 24th. Another long 173 mile run took the show to Marysville, Calif., where only an evening performance was given.

The show elected to not play the northern Pacific coast states of Oregon and Washington this season. This was because of the fact that Cole had not done too well in that area in 1943 and this season the area had been covered thoroughly by Beatty-Russell and Arthur Bros. Cole also passed up the San Francisco bay area and moved on from Marysville toward Los Angeles playing Modesto and Bakersfield, then took off an entire day to make the long and difficult 163 mile run to Glendale for performances on August 31. The Los Angeles stand began September 1 and ran thru the 17th inclusively. Just prior to the California tour the show

Photo No. 21 - Bill Woodcock, Sr. with elephant on Cole Bros. lot at McCook, Neb., July 29, 1944. Photo by Joe Fleming.



made some changes in its press staff. C. Foster Bell was replaced by Emmett Sims and Eddie Johnson by Conrad Mitchell. Those remaining on the staff included Ora O. Parks, Frank J. Lee, C.S. Primrose, and Howard Mass.

The early California stands saw some very hot weather and Freddie Freeman wrote in his *Billboard* column that it had been 102 and higher every day.

The Sept. 23, 1944 *Billboard* reporting on recent developments said that Cole Bros. had experienced okay business in California and other places of late. There were two straw houses in Ogden, Utah, and business in Reno had been great. The long jump into Marysville was made in the worst heat wave ever in that section with temperatures hovering at 106 to 110. Business in Marysville was light. Modesto, Fresno, and Bakersfield despite intense heat gave fine business and Glendale was good for a half filled matinee and packed house at night. Business was light in Los Angeles for the 2 days prior to Labor Day but good houses came on the holiday but because of the lingering heat wave subsequent matinees were light. Night houses gradually began building as the week went on. The second week was big with four full houses on Saturday and Sunday. It was reported that Jack Bigger, trainmaster, was injured during the loading at Glendale but was now recuperating in the Rutland Hotel in Los Angeles. Con Colleano who was injured again in Reno was reported to be able to return to the performance very shortly. Much equipment was repainted in Glendale and the show made a nice appearance on the Hill and Washington streets lot, and much favorable comment was heard. The stand, however, was made very frustrating because of the over zealousness of some city officials and the stringent regulations forced on the show. Freddie Freeman wrote that Los Angeles was a big disappointment and that he never knew a city could put so many obstacles in the way of a circus.

The Sept. 30, 1944 *Billboard* continued coverage of the Los Angeles stand with headlines, "Cole Bros. Week End Shows Hold Up Well in 17 Day Run During Engagement in Los Angeles."



Photo No. 22 - The Slayman-Ali acrobatic troupe on Cole Bros. lot at McCook, Neb., July 29, 1944. Photo by Joe Fleming.

The piece said that both hot and cold weather socked attendance. With show arriving at time schools opened and the third installment on income tax falling due the show had crowds far below par. On Sept. 7-8 the mercury hit 103-104 degrees. Near the end of the run the evenings had turned quite cool. There were many obstacles. The city required the use of its power with the diesel wagons stationed nearby in readiness in case the current failed. In keeping with the new fire laws the tents were wet down two hours before every performance, 5 exits were required, and seating capacity cut. Extra firemen and police were on hand as was a fire truck. The lot was set up differently this year with the big top centered on the lot and wagons parked on the fringe of it. No wagons were permitted next to the tent. This was done to allow free evacuation in case of fire. Zack Terrell arrived on September 17 after having been away for some time on a well earned rest in the mountains of Montana. Con Collenao returned to the performance during the final days of the stand. Milani Antalek, top mounter in the Antalek act, underwent an emergency appendectomy, however, the act is continuing with Betty Biller filling in. Other recent injuries were suffered by Bobby Donoval, broken hand, in the high jumping number, and Priscella Plunkett, broken arm, in the ballet.

Upon conclusion of the Los Angeles run the show moved to Long Beach for two days, Sept. 18-19, then played single dates in Santa Ana, Pasadena, San Bernadino, and Riverside, which was the final stand in the state.

We are fortunate to have as a part of this article the recollections of Garnett "Bud" Sims who was a member of the elephant department for part of the 1944 season. Bud had received a medical discharge from the Army a

few months earlier because of a rheumatic heart condition but says he was still an active 19 year old looking for adventure. He went out with Wallace Bros. Circus in the elephant department at the beginning of the 1944 season but left after several weeks and joined Cole Bros. in the same capacity at Grand Rapids, Mich., June 19. Bill Woodcock, Sr. also became a member of the elephant department a short time later and he and Bud worked for Eugene "Arky" Scott, elephant superintendent, for the remainder of the season. Woodcock, of course, had handled elephants for many years while Bud was a real first of May. The two men became good friends and Bud has a wealth of Woodcock stories he can tell. I requested that he put some of his recollections down on paper to be used in this article and he kindly consented. I felt it would be interesting to get views of the Cole Bros. Circus that season, not only from the top, by way of the interview with Noyelle Burkhart, the general manager, but also from a young man making his first season under the big top. Some of Bud Sims memories of Cole 1944 are as follows.

"Very little has been stated about Zack Terrell other than his management and ability as a successful showman. Woodcock had him listed as one of the greats in his book. He made the show move. If it didn't the axe would fall somewhere. Many of the old timers (bosses) remained with Terrell year after year even though he could be tough to work for. Sort of like Patton of Army fame. Now those who were under him will brag about it because he was a leader, thick or thin. Remember the ads in *Billboard* asking for help which would continue with — 'good treatment, good cookhouse, etc.' The cookhouse headed the list for any working man. Cole always fed good, real good. Arky Scott and practically all of the superintendents were rough. If you did your job, kept your nose clean, you ranked number 1 and was looked out for on the show. Some men would last a day, some longer, then

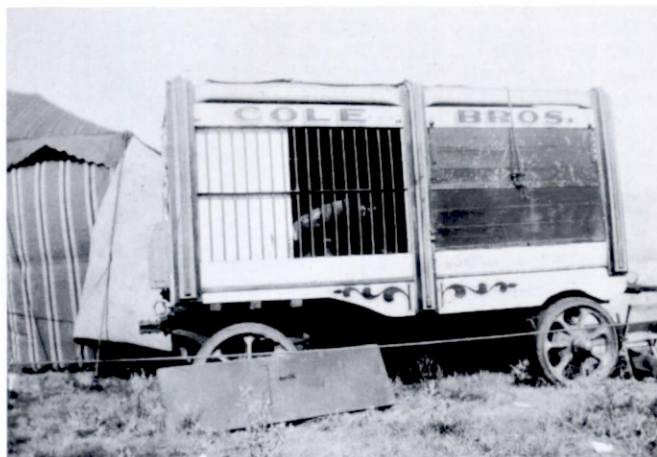


Photo No. 23 - Chimpanzee cage No. 16 in open air menagerie on Cole Bros. lot at McCook, Neb., July 29, 1944. Photo by Joe Bradbury.

leave. Most of these were bums anyhow and would move from one show to another. Somewhere under all of this was adventure, it was home. I had enough money to see me home any day that I wished to leave, but I didn't. I enjoyed every day and rough as it was, I never was hollered at, never scared, and never homesick. Arky Scott would allow no drinkers in our department. He never had any favorites around. All were treated alike. This included Woodcock. No animals were to be mistreated and it was a daily must that we all bathed, washed our clothes and had our uniforms neatly hung up. This was almost like the Army, but we were a proud department and we were always neat and clean with our own dressing top, water cooler, etc. Woodcock told me once — 'stay with Arky and you will learn more about elephants than from any man on the road.' It seems funny now, Woodcock taking a bath in a wash tub. He would be standing in the tub with hat on, scrubbing, and singing some old minstrel song.

"I came on the show in Grand Rapids. That afternoon I followed the bull act in but did not help, just watched. That night I went with Fuzz Plunkett on one elephant team. He showed me where to spot the wagons that I would be pulling. He and I became close friends from that day on.

"I got an extra 25 cents a day for pulling the Columbia wagon from the midway to the back side of the sideshow each night where sideshow trunks would be loaded in it. If it was raining I usually picked up 50 cents for this task. The reason for the pay was that it was not the elephant department's job and if there was a delay for the caterpillar man, it further delayed him that night.

"When the sideshow band struck up 'St. Louis Blues', that was our cue to sweep off the bulls and put the blankets

on. Also, wash our face and don our uniforms.

"There were three rings of elephants. Old Blanche would make spec but nothing else. Ring 1 had Dorothy Lewis with Bill Cox; center ring had Jean Allen with Arky Scott, and Ring 3 had Marion Knowlton and Bill Woodcock. I aided Woodcock. As a finale all bulls would lay down and a girl would straddle the bull's neck, all would rise, turn toward the back side with half going one way, the balance the opposite way, and meet in the center of the track in front of the reserves, and would end up with a long mount with each bull having a girl on it. Most of the girls were afraid or if we moved too fast they would be left standing on the track. Arky told us if they don't get on when the bull lays down, forget them and go on. Most of the time this is what happened.

"The elephant, Katie, was nervous, always looking out of the corner of her eye. Would squeeze you if you didn't speak to her first. Tony would kill you if Arky wasn't around.

"Iowa, the peanut butcher, had a spot in the menagerie and people would swarm to him for peanuts. Most of the nuts could be found later under the bulls' hay. Bulls could spot a kid at one end of the tent coming in with a cotton candy stick. Soon as the kid was close enough, away would go the sugar stuff. Usually the elephant acted cool and innocent and would take the person off guard.

"There were about five young kids working in the animal department. This included the cages also. Woodcock and I always looked for the truant officer any day to pick them up but they didn't. We all bought coveralls from some clothing shark one day on the lot. All the coveralls were dark rust color with small red stripes running up and down the material. Here again Woodcock claimed he and all of us were members of the Georgia chain gang. When the going was tough, raining, and we would be knee deep in mud, old Colonel Woodcock would be singing to us. One time he stood on a bale of hay and recited the Gettysburg address for us. Quoting from Shakespeare was his favorite subject. If we played a town more than one day, then Woodcock and I would head for the movies.

"The prima donna, Jan Cidney, would sing a well known opera solo before the show started. One time I asked Woodcock what was the title of the song she was singing and he replied, 'It will never get well if you pick at it.'

"Gene Weeks was in charge of concessions and in the center of the menagerie was their headquarters during show time. Almost like Wall Street and the stock market it was. Weeks sat at one end of the candy stand on a high chair and operated the cash register. Every time a butcher (there

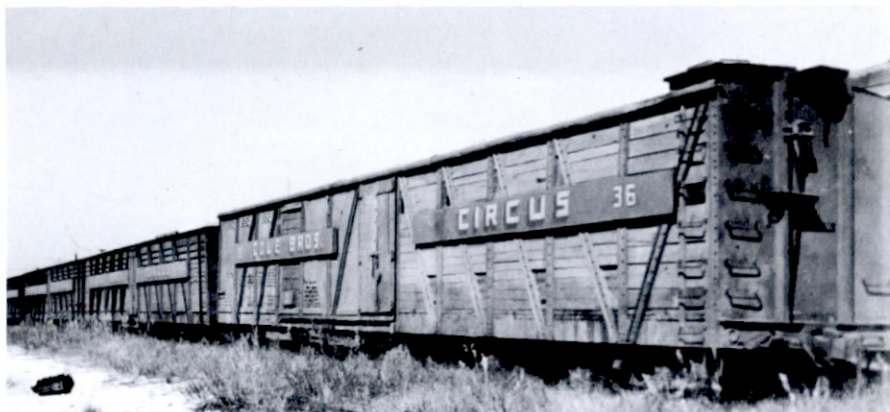


Photo No. 24 - Cole Bros. elephant and stock cars on siding at Galveston, Texas, Oct. 29-30, 1944. Photo by W.H.B. Jones.

were approximately 30) unloaded his goodies it was tallied up on the till by Weeks. The butchers also erected the menagerie top in the morning but at night the big top crew took it down and the butchers, after the performance was over, worked on the big top canvas.

"John Smith and Mahlon Campbell were both fine horse trainers. Both chewed tobacco. Both were jealous of each other in their riding feats and menage. They had the boxing horses, Campbell with one and Smith the other. The horses stood on their hind legs, boxed, rested, stood up again, then came a knock out. This was a real crowd pleaser for horse lovers. The biggest show would be watching these two men working the act. Both were always arguing and if one didn't know better, you would think they were ready to fight themselves.

"The large plush panda bear was a new thing at the time. The preshow candy pitch was based around this

item. Harry Thomas would make his talk how it is impossible for any candy company to give away watches, radios, etc. but to really make it interesting there would be so many yellow coupons placed within the boxes of candy which would entitle the lucky owner to receive one of these big bears free. Boy, they sure went for the candy and just about the time people started getting noisy, wondering who was winning the bears, Harry would blow the whistle and the big show would start, then everyone forgot about the bear. This was really watching the cue for an announcer. Harry Thomas was the greatest as far as I'm concerned. At one time Thomas was filling in the band as a snare drummer. Later there were two snares. Even the director played bass drum along with his little slide whistle at times. Soon after the Ringling-Barnum fire in Hartford the band was enlarged. Maybe some came from over there. Incidentally, the plush bear would be displayed daily until it got so dirty and shabby that a new one had to be purchased. One bear would promote several hundred dollars into the concession business, a feat that I doubt has ever been accomplished since.

"The lead stock, camels, llamas, goats, zebras etc. were something else. Each morning and at night these animals were tied together in such a manner that they could all be walked to

Photo No. 25 - Zack Terrell's private car, Estrella, at rear of line of Cole Bros. sleepers on siding at Galveston, Texas, Oct. 29-30, 1944. Photo by W.H.B. Jones.

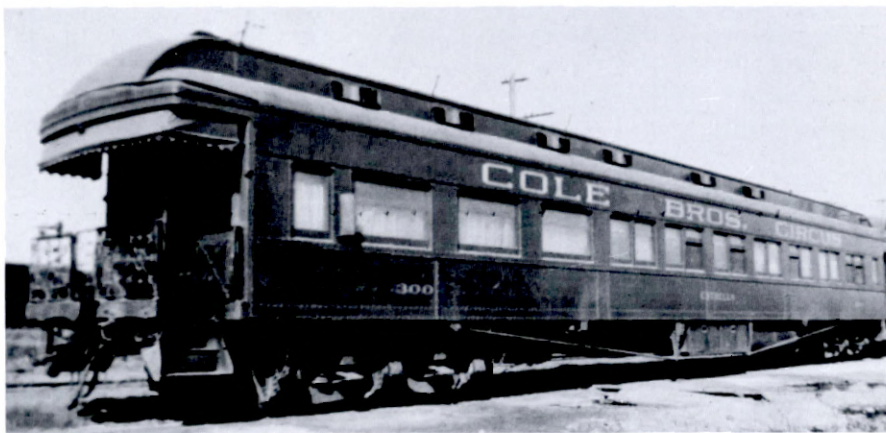




Photo No. 28 - Cole Bros. big top on the lot at San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 22, 1944. Columbia, reserve seat ticket wagon, is in right foreground. Photo by Joe M. Heiser, Jr.

and from the lot as a unit. If I remember right, the camels were first, then the zebras, and on down with the goats bringing up the rear. In case the group stopped for any reason the goat on the end could butt them, then the unit would move on. At night a lantern was tied on the camel's neck with another lantern hung on the goat's halter. The stock men walked on each side and both front and rear. These men must have walked hundreds of miles each season as in many cities the lot was a long haul from the railroad. I always imagined what if some drunk would come across this group late at night. He would probably swear off drinking as this unusual group looked something like Noah heading for the Ark.

"During the season it was not uncommon to find a government agent, usually located just outside the cookhouse checking draft cards. The circus would be a dangerous place for any draft dodger to hide.

"The sleepers were very comfortable. Bunks were three high with two men to a bunk. Each department had their own bunks with the department's name on it. Fortunately, I had a top bunk all to myself. A small pie car for workmen was located in the next car. There you could purchase sandwiches, coffee, rolls, etc.

"It is interesting to note there was one novelty stand that followed us from town to town and always set up on some person's front yard where the foot traffic would pass by. This was a

big family organization and they made it every day, over the mountains, desert, etc. It goes to be that we would look for them each night on our way to the train and would speak and wave to each other. They must have had their own advance to take care of the lawn, etc.

"Why can't all present day circuses have their elephants come in and put on an act like they did it on Cole Bros. in 1944? Harry Thomas would announce, 'Keep your children off the hippodrome track, the elephants are coming in under the direction of the master of all elephant trainers, Capt. Eugene Scott'. The band would really play a gallop, we would come stampeding in, do 34 tricks, finish with a long mount, all within 5 minutes. Now days, most acts, even though well trained, move slow, trainers with a tux on, band playing a tune like 'Born Free' and I sit wondering what a circus will be like in another 25 years. Even the band director tries to impersonate an orchestra leader with a tux of rhinestones and modern jazz and rock music. They too are a very talented group but lack the real circus flavor." (Author's note, CHS Bud Sims also furnished two very fine photographs of the 1944 Cole Bros. elephant herd and personnel).

queue and menagerie in rear, and on right the blue colored big top. Columbia, reserve seat ticket wagon, is in foreground. Photo by W.H.B. Jones.

Sunday, Sept. 24, was spent making the 375 mile run over the Southern Pacific to Phoenix, Arizona, where the show played two days, Sept. 25-26. Next came stands at Tuscon and Douglas, then the show moved eastward to Texas with initial stand at El Paso, Sept. 29-30.

The Oct. 14, 1944 *Billboard* said the show had two good days in Long Beach, and also Santa Ana and Pasadena were profitable. Riverside had a three-quarters full matinee and turnaway at night. Phoenix gave the largest business ever for Cole with turnaways at all four performances. Tuscon, usually a mediocre town, was a big surprise with great business for the big show, sideshow, and concessions. Douglas, Ariz., Sept. 28, saw the big top half filled in the afternoon and completely full at night. At Douglas the show executed the elephant, Tony, a female, which had been increasingly difficult to handle of late and was now considered dangerous. The death of Tony left a total of 13 elephants in the herd. El Paso gave 4 terrific houses with concession business termed the biggest of the entire season. Terrell and Burkhart told the local press they were highly pleased with the increase in business in this territory over last year, particularly since seating capacity of the big top was greater than 1943. It was mentioned that Con Colleano had now fully recovered and was doing his forward somersault again.

The show's second Texas stand was at Amarillo, Oct. 2, then came a move into New Mexico to play Clovis, after which it was back into Texas to play dates at Lubbock, Sweetwater, Brownwood, and San Angelo. Cole went into Oklahoma for a single date at Altus, Oct. 9, then came back into Texas at Vernon which was followed by two days in Wichita Falls. Next came a run of 209 miles to Corsicana where only an evening performance was given on October 13. The show played the author's birthplace, Tyler, Texas, on October 14. (Oh, how I wished I could have been there the day Cole

Photo No. 26 - Cole Bros. on lot at Galveston, Texas, Oct. 29-30, 1944. Tents left to right are portion of sideshow with lowered bannerline in front, mar-



Photo No. 27 - Menagerie canvas wagon, No. 40, on Cole Bros. lot at Galveston, Texas, Oct. 29-30, 1944. Photo by W.H.B. Jones.





Photo No. 31 - Paul Nelson and the horse riding sea lion on Cole Bros. lot at San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 22, 1944. This was an unusual act featured in the 1944 performance. Photo by Joe M. Heiser, Jr.

played rather than in eastern France where it was becoming apparent every day we would soon be putting in another wartime winter). Then it continued with a long run of Texas dates which included Waco, Temple, Taylor (where the author also once lived), Austin, San Marcos, two days in San Antonio, Beeville, McAllen, Harlingen, two days in Corpus Christi, and Bay City. A two day stand in Galveston, Oct. 29-30, concluded the lengthy Texas tour.

The Oct. 21, 1944 *Billboard* said that Cole's business continued big in the southwest. At Amarillo, Oct. 2, in the midst of the first real "norther" of the season, coupled with a broken city water main which flooded the lot, it was mainly a day of misery for the troupers. However, business was tremendous. Clovis, N.M., saw a capacity matinee and turnaway at night. Lubbock, Texas, Oct. 4, was one of the great days of the season. People lined for two blocks one hour before the downtown ticket sale opened and it remained that way all day. Sweetwater, Texas, gave two full houses and Brownwood, despite terrific heat, it being the hottest day of the season, gave capacity business. San Angelo was a surprise and saw people lined 4 deep around the block from the downtown ticket sale office. Show officials said it was the biggest downtown sale ever, even breaking the record set at Jackson, Miss., in 1942. All reserve seats for both performances were sold downtown and also over 200 special tickets for the matinee were sold. Sideshow and concession business for the preceding week was said to be the heaviest of the entire season.

The Oct. 28, 1944 *Billboard* continued the report of the great Texas tour the show had. With headlines, "Texas Turnouts Tilt Box Office. Cole Does Biz on Return Trip. Some Capacity Houses are Played. Wichita Falls is made in Cold." The article continued

that Vernon, Texas, Oct. 10, had a half filled matinee with capacity at night. Cold weather at Wichita Falls, Oct. 11-12, affected the take the first day but it warmed up the second and attendance was much better. Corsicana gave good business at the evening only show and Tyler almost equalled the tremendous business of San Angelo with full houses in ideal weather. Milani Antalek returned to her act in Wichita Falls. Charley Forrest of the Harold Voise Troupe returned at Waco after having been ill for two weeks. Whitey Govro, wrestler, is driving a truck while the show is in Texas as wrestling is forbidden in the state. Freddie Freeman wrote in his column that Govro now driving one of the show's trucks while in Texas has been given the nickname of "Wrong Way Govro", claiming he pulled the stringer wagon to the lot, circled the lot, then returned to the runs with it.

While at Temple, Texas, Oct. 17, the performers put on a special show at noon for more than 1,000 patients at McCloskey General Hospital for wounded servicemen. The sudden death of veteran clown, Karyl DeMotte, just before the matinee in Temple caused sadness among all personnel.

The Nov. 11, 1944 *Billboard* gave the final report on the Texas tour, saying that in past years, especially 1943, bad weather had hurt the show in the state but this year the weather had been good and business marvelous. Waco, Oct. 18, had a capacity matinee and turnaway at night. Temple, Taylor, and Austin came through with good takes, and San Marcos, Oct. 20, a small town, was a pleasant surprise with a half house at the matinee and capacity at night. The best business the show ever had in San Antonio was done during the Oct. 21-22 engagement. Beeville, McAllen, and Harlingen all produced good takes and the first day in Corpus Christi was strong. Final notes said that Eddie Woeckener's augmented band was the talk of the town, his renditions of classical numbers in the pre-show concerts making a hit with the troupers.

Cole's tour of Texas was made with very little competition from other shows. Ordinarily Ringling-Barnum



Photo No. 29 - George Hubler (in Army Air Corps uniform) and group of clowns on Cole Bros. lot at San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 22, 1944. Photo by Joe M. Heiser, Jr.

would probably have come thru the state in the fall, but after the fire the show played only a few weeks of extended engagements in open air stadiums, so Cole had most of Texas to itself. The large motorized Clyde Beatty-Russell Bros. did make a short tour of some northern and eastern cities but it appears it did not clash with Cole except at one stand, Tyler.

Leaving the Lone Star State Cole Bros. went into Louisiana with first stand coming at Lake Charles, Oct. 31, which was followed by Baton Rouge, Alexandria, and Monroe. Mississippi was next with dates played at Vicksburg, Meridan, Yazoo City, Greenwood, Greenville, and Clarksdale. The show then moved northward into Tennessee for two days in Millington which was the final stand of the 1944 season.

The Dec. 2, 1944 *Billboard* said that the season just concluded had been a great one for the Cole show and especially the last three weeks had produced good business. The final week had seen the show in Louisiana and Mississippi in almost midsummer weather. Three shows were necessary in Baton Rouge so great was the number of patrons wanting to see the performance. The closing stand was made inside the confines of the National Air Technical Training Center in Millington, Tenn., 17 miles from Memphis. The circus had been brought there by the USO to give three performances. Nearly 30,000 sailors in training there saw the show. The railroad cars were parked inside the reservation and tents erected on government property. Some 200 men from the training center were detailed to assist in setting up and tearing down the show. Terrell, Burkhart, and J.D. Newman all gave interviews which were printed in the local press. All agreed the season had been most successful. Burkhart also said the circus would be enlarged in 1945 with a

larger big top to be used and seating capacity increased.

Immediately after the close in Millington the show moved over the Illinois Central to the Louisville quarters. The first week after returning to Louisville saw cold and rainy weather. By the first of December it was announced work had begun in the shops on some of the wagons. A carload of stock left on Thanksgiving Day for Orrin Davenport's indoor circus date in Wichita, Kan. Included were elephants, horses, ponies, and seals. Eugene Scott had the elephants, John Smith, horses, and Melvin Plunkett, seals, and total personnel making the trip was around 25.

Bud Sims recalled a few of the stands played by Cole Bros. in 1944 as follows:

"While in Minnesota it was nothing but mud, rain, and soft lots but we sure packed them in. For a while there was no spec presented, until we got in Iowa. When the show played Des Moines there was quite a crowd on hand at the runs in the morning. One of our bulls had originally come from a zoo there and the city kids had given her the name of 'Baby Mine'. We made spec that day and a special banner was worn by her making this statement. She was now called Kate, or Katie.

"I recall only one stand being lost during the season, Superior, Wis.

"In Cheyenne, Wyo. we played at the Frontier Days round-up corral. Here the cookhouse was set up under the seats and no top was used. Woodcock and I looked at several coaches, buckboards and other rodeo items which were stored there.

"Played in the fairgrounds in Salt Lake City. Parade grounds in Minneapolis were used, located right down town.

"In Dillon, Mont., there was hardly a soul around during the morning. By afternoon they flocked in. They came in old beat up cars, trucks, etc. Indians were everywhere. No night show was given at all, and the sheep herders headed back to their flocks, I guess.

"Los Angeles was spotty. Some real good crowds, then some slack ones. Lot of personalities there. The 17 days gave us a lot of time to visit the city. The route from California to Arizona was a long run. Stopped in Yuma at dusk, fed, and watered the animals and sandwiches and coffee were passed through the cars for the men.

"At Galveston, Texas, we played right on the Gulf. Our top was almost on the beach. It was beautiful. Walk a few feet down and take a swim or just sit and watch the ocean.

"We crossed the Mississippi at Baton Rouge. Everyone had to get out of the cars during the trip across. The ferry got about half way across, then it would make a big sweeping curve and turn completely around and then head into the other side for landing.

"Most of the lots in Mississippi were



Photo No. 32 - Cole Bros. famous clowns Otto Griebeling (left) and Freddie Freeman on lot at San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 22, 1944. They are dressed in their costumes complete with gloves and ready for the boxing match which was one of the featured clown gags during the 1944 performance. Photo by Joe M. Heiser, Jr.

the county fairgrounds. The Rabbit Foot Minstrels had billing at most of our stands there.

"Got into winterquarters late at night, but we still unloaded the bulls and walked the animals. The press was on hand early in the morning taking pictures. I still have a newspaper clipping with a picture of old Blanche pushing a cage, with the write-up, stating all was bedded down for the winter."

The Dec. 9, 1944 *Billboard* said that Terrell was making plans to speed up the winding of the big top and Bill Curtis, who had originated canvas spools many years ago, was working on a plan to build new canvas spools which would help solve some of the show's manpower problems. The spools would be able to wind the canvas in 7 minutes. Other notes said a second story had been added to the concrete block office building and would provide living quarters for some personnel and also a wardrobe room. Final statistics were given on the 1944 tour just completed saying the show had travelled 14,271 miles, thru 26 states, going as far as the West Coast. Biggest day of the season was at Baton Rouge, La., with about 23,000 customers seeing the show, and 2 evening performances being given.

The Dec. 16, 1944 *Billboard* said that the show's zoo building at quarters was being enlarged and that work in the shops was ahead of any previous season, all cages having already been renovated and sent to the paint department. Ordinarily work doesn't start until January 1.

All through December quite a bit was printed in the trade publications concerning Cole's plan to build new

canvas spool wagons and also that the train would be enlarged by 5 cars in 1945. Neither of these plans came to fulfillment but it made great speculation at the time.

The Dec. 23, 1944 *Billboard* said Cole would have a new canvas for 1945, including a larger big top. Terrell said the new top had already been completed, another one using dark blue canvas, and was a 150 ft. round with three 50 ft. middles. Seating capacity would be enlarged, the hippodrome track would be wider, and ample space would be reserved for exits required by new fire laws. Canvas would be flameproof in the making. A larger menagerie top would also be used. Other notes in the report had it that the new wardrobe building was nearing completion with electric machines being installed. This department, under direction of Mrs. Harry McFarlan, would begin operation January 1 making new spec wardrobe. Jack Bigger was serving as general superintendent of quarters. George Davis had the cookhouse, Ace Donoval the electric shops, Orville Stewart was handling the train repairs, and Charlie Luckie headed the wagon repair shops.

The Dec. 30, 1944 *Billboard* in summarizing the 1944 season said it had been solid with all organizations hitting a paying streak. Money was plentiful with most shows now in winterquarters and big plans were being made for 1945, including the appearance of a fourth railroad circus as Russell Bros. would go on rails while Clyde Beatty was framing his own motorized show.

The war news which had been good throughout most of the year had grown sour in December following the German successes in the Ardennes of Belgium and Northern France. The Battle of the Bulge had caused many heartaches with its heavy casualties and the realization by the American people that the war in Europe would not be coming to an end in 1944 as so many had hoped and some experts had predicted. Casualties had been heavy in both Europe and the numerous campaigns in the Pacific during 1944. However, conditions on the home front seemed to be improving somewhat. Rationing was still strict, but transportation difficulties for shows had not been as severe as during the two previous seasons. Help, although still very short, was not critical. Performers knew they were expected to do "cherry pie" (helping with set-up and tear down) and the shows made their routes generally on time with matinees usually not over a half to one hour late. In many places the matinees actually started on time. Best news was that circus business in the U.S. was back on a solid footing and was prospering, and as the old year expired optimism was high and showmen were looking forward to next season.

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SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS, THE CIRCUS BEAUTIFUL, SEASON OF 1919

By Gordon M. Carver

The first notice of the Sells-Floto Circus for the season of 1919 came in a very unusual type of want ad in the *Billboard* of January 4. This ad had more of the appearance of an advance notice newspaper ad than a want ad in the *Billboard*. It was headed by a large fancily lettered title of the show with a cut of a bareback rider and horse on the left upper margin and a cut of elephants and giraffes in the upper right hand corner. It said, "FOR SEASON BEGINNING IN EARLY APRIL - The Expectation is to give a Sells-Floto performance unequaled in every way heretofore, hence a bigger Circus in parade and equipment is now built. To emphasize the performance Extraordinary acts are wanted. SINGLE, DOUBLE and TROUPES or SPECIAL NOVELTY that can be of interest or shown in a Circus tent. UNUSUAL WIRE ACTS - TRAINED BEARS - ANY COMEDY KNOCK ABOUT ACTS - BOXING KANGAROOS - BIG CLOWN NUMBER - JAPANESE TROUPE -

TRAINED SEALS and any other unusual display will receive immediate attention and answer, so write quick. TRAINMASTER and STEWARD also WANTED. ASSISTANT BOSSES in ALL Departments WANTED". Replies were to go to H.B. Gentry in Denver.

As the opening date in mid-April neared other ads and news appeared in the *Billboard*. In early March they were still looking for both producing and fill-in clowns and chorus girls. They also wanted a "Monster Serpent" for the side show as well as monkeys, apes, a glassblower and mind reader for the side show. It was also announced that Stobridge (and Donaldson?) would furnish all the advance lithos. The advance was to be headed by Fred Morgan as General Agent, with Edward Arlington, Director of

The Sells-Floto elephant tab, pulled by an eight horse hitch, in a 1919 parade. Cage No. 23 is next pulled by a motorized tractor. All illustrations not otherwise credited are from the Pfening Collection.

Traffic; Ed Kelly, local contractor; William Delly, Manager of Car #1; Jack Oshler, Manager of Car #3; Eddie Deck, contracting press; and Frank Braden, story man.

There was some confusion about when and where the season would start. It was first stated that the opening date would be Saturday, April 19 in Oklahoma City with the show leaving Denver April 12 and arriving in Oklahoma City April 14. Later this was changed and it was correctly announced that the show would open in Wichita Falls, Texas, Thursday, April 17. From there it would move quickly to St. Louis for six days starting April 28 and then into the East for a week in Boston at the end of May.

According to the *Billboard* Wichita Falls gave Sells-Floto Circus a rousing welcome on its opening day. This was the center of a booming oil field and money flowed freely and entertainment was eagerly sought after. It might be interesting to quote the *Billboard* directly and get the full flavor of the day. The huge floating population of the town and the natives of the place jammed the streets, overflowing the curbs when the parade headed downtown. And never was there such a parade. Every band wagon, tableau wagon, float, den, cage and chariot shimmered in the bright April sun, literally resplendent in its bright white new enamel and gold and silver leaf. Plump, sleek, beautiful horses - ring stock and baggage - in polished new and crested harness drew all eyes. Novelty units of the long march past bearing ballet girls in the new and costly 1919 wardrobe of the show, won volleys of applause - real from the heart approval. The immense pageant sparkled throughout its scores of colorful sections. From the first pomed-pomed twelve horse team drawing the first huge white and gold carved tableau bandwagon (the elephant tab), to the eight arch necked blacks pulling the red and silver steam calliope. From the first tableau float with its group of richly garbed, lovely girls to the last elephant in the lumber-



ing column of performing leviathans - little "Billy Sunday" himself swaying along with a smart white trap in tow the procession climaxed everything ever before put on the pavements by a circus. "General Manager, Henry B. Gentry has been termed The Parade Maker, but he has this year left his previous efforts far behind.

"And the business. The afternoon show brought out the extra seats, and even then there was a turnaway. The seats were placed entirely around the hippodrome track, in front of the blues, the turtle backs (?), and grandstands. At night - well at night, the doors were closed at 7:45 and the turnaway crowds played the two side shows at a maximum for over two hours. Then at Fort Worth the next day the attendance was big at both performances.

"If ever a performance spoke for itself the Sells-Floto offering this season does. Without doubt it is superior to any of the past - almost infinitely superior. William Wells, Equestrian Director, has been supplied with an array of big acts and his assembling of the huge program has been nothing short of a triumph of showmanship. He has arranged the show so that it moves speedily in climactic sequence to the rousing, thrilling spectacular finale, emphasizing such striking features as the Alfredo Codona flying act, the Beatrice Sweeney aerial sensation, the Princess Victoria high wire dancing act beautiful and the Lloyds, Hodgins and Hobsons in the greatest riding and equestrian acts in the memory of man.

"The tremendous opening spectacular extravaganza, The Birth of the Rainbow, is this year what it suggests - the birth of the rainbow. With a host of people, including a ballet of 45 girls with the most expensive wardrobe ever seen under canvas this "spec" is all that its name implies. The rings, the air and the track are literally kaleidoscopic - great moving rhythmic masses of rainbow hues. Money was lavished on this feature this spring. It was resolved to make it a thing of beauty beyond all criticism, a mighty picture to enthrall, to intoxicate the masses. Its astonishing success at the evening performance justified every dollar spent. Its climax brought the two great Wichita Falls audiences to their feet.

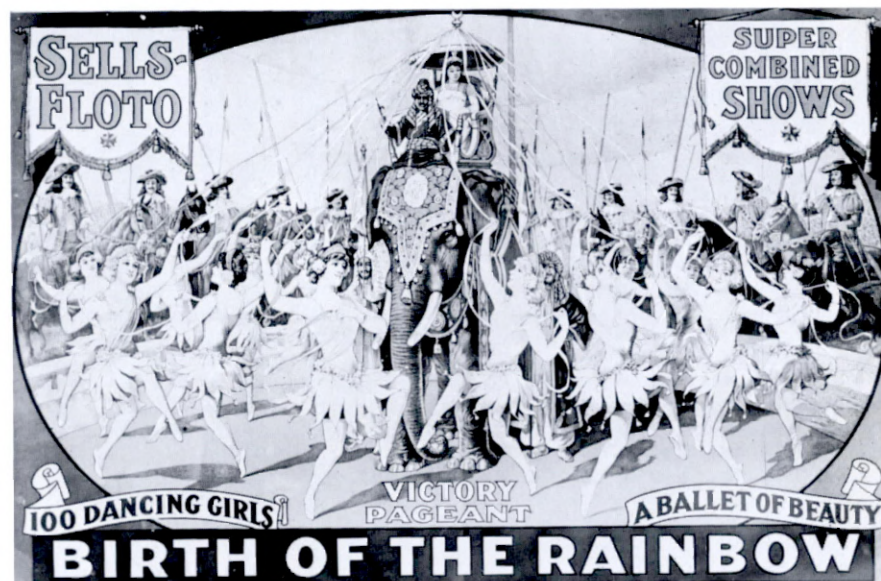
"Henry B. Gentry has this season built a marvelous unit of the show - a homogeneous entity - a perfect organization. He has a most capable staff about him. All departments work smoothly, flawlessly. The spirit of the big troupe - from the executive staff and performers down to the last workman in every division - is that of a winner, a spirit that will make itself felt in the eastern territory.

"W.F. Palmer has one of the best side shows carried by any circus. Features

are Kyke and Sulu, the Zanzibar Last Tribe Pinheads; Carlos Traveno, the two headed Mexican; the Honduras twins, (joined together); African Pygmies and seventeen other attractions. The two shows are beautifully framed and equipped and their business was nothing short of phenomenal.

"The show trains are painted white this year - flats, stock cars, bull cars and sleepers - white with blue lettering. Nothing prettier ever rolled over the steel rails.

"H.H. Tammen and Otto Floto were not on for the opening. They will catch the show in St. Louis for the week of the 28th. They will also be with it during the Boston engagement."



The big spec in 1919 was "Birth of the Rainbow." This special litho was designed and printed by the Strobbridge firm for the 1919 season. Harold Dunn Collection.

This *Billboard* review of the show was unusually flowery even for the *Billboard*. But it was also unusually devoid of details on the performance. As is seen no detailed listing of the program was given and at no time in later issues was it given, which considering the size of the show was most unusual. Fortunately, through the good help of Harold Dunn we were able to obtain a copy of the official program book as used at the Cleveland stand July 28. Again I shall quote directly from this as the flowery language in itself may be of interest. In fact it may be from this that the *Billboard* writer got his inspiration.

The program was headed "SELLS-Floto super CIRCUS. THE CIRCUS BEAUTIFUL - It comes from where the west begins." (note the lower case letters of Floto). It continued, "Operated by The Champion Shows

Company, H.B. Gentry, president and General Manager; William Wells, Equestrian Director; Roy Rush, Assistant Equestrian Director; George L. Myers, Ballet Master and Announcer; and the Sells-Floto Concert Band, C.L. Brown, Director."

It then went on to describe the activities before and during the show, "during the hour before the big show when the menagerie is thrown open to the visiting public, the Sells-Floto Concert Band, augmented by pipe organ vocalina and a special saxophone sextette, will play a repertoire of classical, lyrical and popular selections in the great exhibition tent. This music can be plainly heard and thoroughly enjoyed during the visit in

the menagerie *** And before the big show begins, WATCH FREDDIE BIGGS, FARCICAL MYSTERIOUS CLOWN. Freddie is the only person in the world who can single-handed entertain, amuse, convulse with laughter, rock with choking chuckles, double up with Gargantuan glee a tent filled with 10,000 people. ***"

The program continued after some further extravagant words to describe the spec, "THE BIRTH OF THE RAINBOW. at the end of which you'll find The Pot of Gold, as pictured to us in the land of fable, legend and myth, populated by the facetious gnomes and elves whose playgrounds are the chimerical and capricious clouds 'mid which they tell of their wondrous discovery in finding The Pot of Gold attaining what all the universe longs to possess - HAPPINESS. - A PAGEANT OF POMP, HARMONY AND TRIUMPH. Colossal in its conception, kaleidoscopic in its bewildering maneuvering of women's loveliness and efflorescence in her charms *** A COALESCENCE OF COLORED HUES. a super allegorical



The stock cars and loaded train are shown shortly after arriving for a stand during the 1919 season. Jim McRoberts Collection.

extravaganza garbed in the opulence of harmony, symmetry of movement, consonance of sound depicting of youth in its many stages of evolution, proving conclusively that ghosts of happiness dwell in our House of Dreams, vying with Rome's splendors in the era of the Coliseum and its many feasts of stirring festivities *** IN THIS POT OF GOLD are many wild beasts brought from the lands spanned by the rainbow thru fading years. There are horses from Arabian dams and sires of royal lineage - white satin coated, long maned, tender natured horses which have learned the language of accomplishment and translated this language into graceful deeds. There will also be found God's greatest creation - WOMAN - lovely, enchanting, charming, alluring woman, lavishly bedecked in resplendent jewels, effervescent in her charms, translucent and crystalline in her raiments, endowed in profusion by nature's bounteous hand. Awaiting the trumpet to blazon its clarion notes on the gathered multitudes, a signal, the auspicious invasion is advancing into the huge arena where the festivities are to be inaugurated."

The foregoing, slightly edited for brevity's sake, is perhaps the most effusive description of any circus program number that I have ever come across. The Press Agent who composed this was an artist in his field. Dexter Fellows who plied the craft with all the big shows under the Ringling banner and who was noted for his skill with the flowery English could not have done better, if as well. After this introduction the program continued in more normal manner. DISPLAY NO. 1

Ring 1

Revolving stages and comedy

monkeys with clown riders ** Bucking mules and clowns

Ring 2

Revolving stages and comedy donkeys with clown riders ** Bucking mules and clowns

Ring 3

Revolving stages and comedy donkeys with clown riders ** Bucking mules and clowns

Nero had these mules in his Roman Circus Maximus. They're tough and wise old birds now.

DISPLAY NO. 2

Ring 1

Elephants, Irene Montgomery

Ring 2

Elephants, Blanch Dours

Ring 3

Elephants, Idah Delno

DISPLAY NO. 3

Ring 1

Comedy revolving ladder, Hendricks and Livingston ** Double trapeze, Speeney and Newton ** Swinging ladder, Hazel Earl

Ring 2

Balancing ladder Pink and Bessie Wright ** Balancing trapeze

Ring 3

Double trapeze, Aerial Nelsons ** Swinging ladder, Marie Berger ** Comedy revolving ladder, Comdy Katon

DISPLAY NO. 4

All clowns on the track - forty of 'em. Out they swarm to engage in animated caricature and burlesque and in the favorite Harlequinades of children of all ages.

You say you haven't laughed at a clown since 1887? Well unbutton your vest, you're going to be a new man after these drolls get thru with you.

DISPLAY NO. 5

Ring 1

Ladies Principal Riding Act - Lloyds

Ring 2

Ladies Principal Riding Act - Hodgini

Ring 3

Ladies Principal Riding Act - Hobsons

What would the circus be without pret-



Another view of the Floto show about to unload the flats during the 1919 season. Jim McRoberts Collection.

ty girl riders? Beautiful white ring horses? We leave it all to you.

DISPLAY NO. 6

Clownville In Flames

All the merrymakers to the rescue with their money-manned fire apparatus and safety nets. Because of their excellent simian support in this number, the clowns have to work extraordinarily hard.

DISPLAY NO. 7

Ring 1

Statue Horses

Ring 2

Double Statue Groups

Ring 3

Statue Horses

Haute Ecole Horses in poses and evolutions on the track,

All girl trainers, models and riders in this huge number, which climaxes in "Victory" pageantry on the track with horses, ponies, dogs and doves, added to the many groupings in the rings - a tremendous and inspiring spectacle.

Give Willie Wells and Roy Rush a little thought after this display. They trained every horse and creature in it. Some job.

DISPLAY NO. 8

Clowns on the track in travesties of events as ticked off on today's tapes. (Courtesy Associated Press, United Press and International Press).

DISPLAY NO. 9

Ring 1

Combination Gymnast and Perch, Marguerite & Hanley ** Tight Wire Dancing, Miss Freda Biggs

Ring 2

Daring and Hazardous Feats on the High Wire, Rodrigus

Ring 3

Wire Dancing, Lucky Troupe ** Wire Dancing, Miss Lloyd

DISPLAY NO. 10

Ring 1

Comedy Bar Act, Livingston Trio

Ring 2

Gymnastic Act, 7 Bonimoor Arabs

Ring 3

Comedy Bar Act, Stokes and Engine **
Contortion Comedy, Rue Enos
DISPLAY NO. 11

Ring 1

Swinging Ladder, Irene Montgomery
** Hand Balancing and Contortion,
Idah Delano

Ring 2

Dainty Diversion of Gymnastic World

Ring 3

Roman Rings, DeGarros Trio **
Roman Rings, The Wrights ** Swinging Ladder, "Mabelle"
DISPLAY NO. 12

Clowns on the track in travesties of events ticked off on today's tapes. (Courtesy Associated Press, United Press and International News Service).

DISPLAY NO. 13

All eyes on her **Miss Berta Beeson**. The Aerial Dancing Marvel, The Pavlova of the Mid-air Thread. We have absolutely nothing to say.

DISPLAY NO. 14

Ring 1

Riding Collie Troupe, 18 Ponies

Ring 2

Flying Return Act, The Nelson Family

Ring 3

Riding Collie Troupe, 18 Ponies

DISPLAY NO. 16

Ring 1

Aerial Butterflies, The Lucky Sisters

Ring 2

Aerial Butterflies, Sweeney Girls

Ring 3

Aerial Butterflies, Lillian Kincaid Troupe

DISPLAY NO. 17

Positively the most thrilling and spectacular riding acts on earth

The Hobsons

Indian Troupe in Breakneck Riding

The Lloyds

Indian Troupe in Daredevilish Horsemanship

The Hodgins

Indian Troupe in Reckless Equestrian Feats

WATCH THESE ACTS! THEY ARE THE FASTEST EVER CONCEIVED AND PRESENTED"

And so the program for 1919 came to an end. There were no races or hunt scenes as most of the other shows of the period had to wind up show. Further as we look at the various acts presented there were not many acts that were of particular outstanding quality. Except for the three Bareback troupes, Berta Beeson and the Nelson Family there were no names that were leaders among the performers in the circus world. Considering the size of the show, 30 cars, this is somewhat surprising.

After the opening in Wichita Falls the show moved to Fort Worth, Dallas and Oklahoma City and then on to Tulsa, Bartlesville, Coffeyville, Joplin and Springfield before arriving in St.



The massive spread of canvas of the Floto show is pictured in Ithaca, New York, in this photo taken by Frank Ferrell.

Louis for the week of May 28. Here the show received good notices. The St. Louis Dispatch said, "It is not the largest circus but the costumes have a newness and brightness and the performers will not be deposed as long as they continue to do as well as they are."

Before the season was hardly under way help shortages were in evidence as was typical on most circuses in that postwar year of 1919. This need persisted all through the season, although it never seemed to become acute. Two of the center ring acts listed in the July program above, the Nelson Family, flying return act, and Rodrigus, tight wire act, did not join until early July. The Nelson Family apparently joined as a result of the ad appearing in the June 7 *Billboard* asking for "springboard or trampoline act, Chinese act, big double flying return act." Other want ads for lithographers and billers as well as one in August for the side show asking for "freaks, novelties, big snake, orang-tang." Apparently the ad in the March 8 *Billboard* asking for "Monster Serpent *** also apes" didn't get any results or if it did the attractions had left by this time for greener pastures.

After the week in St. Louis, the show started a fast trip East but not without problems. Indianapolis and Richmond, Ind., followed by Dayton gave no problems, but the last three days of the week were a complete loss. At Columbus they lost the parade and both shows due to hard rains, while the next day at Akron with a long haul and

The midway of the Floto show in 1919 with the sideshow on the left and the pit show, with pinheads on the right. Taken in Ithaca, N.Y., on July 23.



muddy lot was another total loss. Finally Cleveland billed for Saturday, May 10, also had to be cancelled due to terrible mud at the lot. However, Cleveland was rescheduled later for Monday, July 28.

The next week saw a complete turnaround of the weather. Going right across New York State through Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica to Albany gave the show good business. All of these cities were to see the Ringling-Barnum show a little later. The only problem during this week was at Rochester where after a fairly short run from Buffalo they were very late getting in but still gave the parade in mid-afternoon and two shows to big business. The last day of the week the show was in Pittsfield, Mass.

At this time, just prior to the week in Boston, they moved into Canada at Toronto, Monday, May 20, where they had big business in spite of billing by the John Robinson Circus for June 4-5. About this time Fred Morgan, General Agent, resigned, for personal reasons not connected with the show. Who replaced him was not immediately announced. The next day at Belleville was a repeat of two weeks before with the date lost due to a long haul and deep mud on the lot. After the next day at Ottawa the week ended with two days in Montreal where they had to have five shows to accommodate the crowds. But again mud was a problem and it was only with great difficulty that they were able to get off the lot for their move to Boston.

Sells-Floto Circus was to be in competition with RBBB all through the East in the early weeks of the summer. In Boston for May 26-31 they were ahead of the Big One as they had been all across New York State, and in Cleveland, too, had they not been rained out there. The Ringling-Barnum show was not due into Boston until



This one sheet upright panel by Strobbridge was first used in 1919. Each of these new lithos carried a small line of type at the bottom reading "Copyright Sells-Floto Shows Co. 1919." Harold Dunn Collection.

June 9. The opening matinee for Sells-Floto in Boston gave the largest attendance that any circus had ever had there before. The papers were lavish in their praise of the show which it was expected would result in good business throughout the rest of the New England stands. This also, of course, helped in Boston and the stay there resulted in a take of \$10,000 more than had been expected.

By now the show was moving smoothly with, except for the Fred Morgan resignation mentioned above,

no changes in the management of the show. Henry Bushea was in charge of the animals in the menagerie while Henry Brown was the Boss Hostler. John Eberle was responsible for getting the canvas up and down, and Charles Luckey was still after many years with the show responsible for the props in the big show performance. The candy stands were being handled by Frank Beatty, Jim Wilson was taking care of the large and expensive wardrobe for both the parade and spec, and last but not least Fred Seymour was according to clown Fred Gay, who had joined in mid-June, giving the best meals he had ever had on any show and that all the folks on the show certainly appreciated it.

When the show left Boston it moved to Springfield followed by 22 cities and towns in the New England states plus in the middle of this stretch, two New York towns, Glens Falls and Troy. On June 2 they played to capacity business at both shows on Richardson Field in Springfield. Three days later at Pawtucket, R.I., the *Evening Times* said the show was good and clean and its attaches well behaved and considerate.

Again we are indebted to the late Isaac Marcks for his recording of the Pittsfield, Mass., stand on June 16, 1919. The show arrived on Sunday, June 14, with a 28 car train, consisting of 14 flats, 6 horse cars, 1 elephant car and 7 sleepers. (The Havirland list shows a rail breakdown of 2 advance cars, 6 stocks, 14 flats and 8 sleepers.) There were 45 wagons, 1 tractor, 2 autos and 3 small carts. The unloading was completed by 12:30 p.m.

All of the train cars and wagons were painted white, with the sleepers trimmed in yellow. Two work elephants were used to spot the wagons on the lot and the tractor was used to haul the wagons to the lot. All

This steam calliope was used on the Sells-Floto show for the last time during the 1919 season.

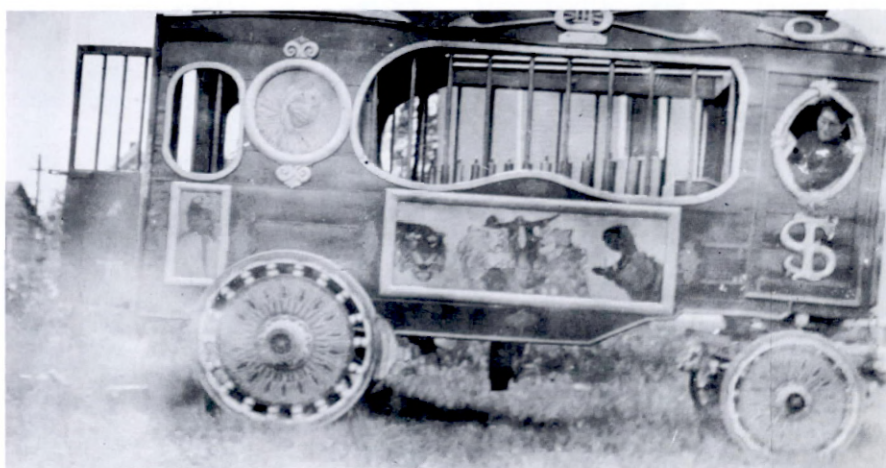


Another one sheet by Strowbridge Litho introduced during the 1919 season. Harold Dunn Collection.

of the big top poles were repainted Sunday afternoon. The canvas inventory consisted of the big top, menagerie, side show, No. 2 side show, ring stock top, dressing top, wardrobe top, band top, dining top, cookhouse top, draft stock top, and 2 concession tops.

The parade on Monday, June 16, included all of the cages, 2 air calliopes, the steam calliope, two sections of the big show band and a clown band. The No. 2 side show had only the pinheads.

In the menagerie were 8 elephants, 6 camels, 2 ostriches and 10 cages of animals, including a hippo. A full house attended the matinee, and by 6 p.m. the dining tent and horse tops were down and ready to move. Another big crowd turned out for the evening show which started at 8 p.m. and was



over about 10 p.m. By 9 p.m. the menagerie was down and by 9:30 the side show started to come down, forgetting about a blowoff to catch these leaving the big show. The big top was lowered about 11:30 and The train pulled out at 1 a.m. for the next stand in Glens Falls, N.Y.

It would appear that very few New England towns of any consequence were missed. Among those that Sells-Floto did not favor with their presence were Bridgeport, New Haven, Worcester, Holyoke and Providence. This part of the tour ended on June 30 at Burlington, Vt.

On July 1 the show moved into New York, at Malone, where it stayed through July 9 at Middletown. The Fourth of July was spent in Watertown where it had a very warm, a packed tent in the afternoon but only fair attendance at the night show. Here Fred Seymour put on the traditional July Fourth Feed, starting with clam broth, radishes, young onions and olives. This was followed by fried halibut with tartar sauce, fricassee chicken with dumplings and prime ribs of beef au jus accompanied by new potatoes in cream, fresh peas, stewed corn and new buttered beets. Along with this there was a combination salad and fruit punch. For dessert he served strawberry shortcake, Neapolitan ice cream, assorted cakes, American cheese and finished it off with iced tea and coffee. As usual it was quite a feed, but no bigger or better and perhaps with less variety than the much smaller 15 car Sparks Circus served with much smaller kitchen facilities.

On July 9 the show entered New Jersey at Englewood for a brief stay. This town of then predominately wealthy families gave the show poor business. And then the next day at New Brunswick on a lot along side the Pennsylvania R.R. main line a passing train spewing sparks set the big top on fire. No one was hurt and only slight damage to one middle piece was incurred. It was indeed fortunate that the damage was so limited. From there the show moved to the sea shore resort town of Long Branch and then on to Newark where they did capacity business at both shows, this in a city which was supposed to be not very hospitable to any circuses except Ringling-Barnum. The same capacity business was done the next day, Tuesday, July 15, in Plainfield. Now with the season into mid-July they were no longer getting into cities ahead of RBBB as they had across the mid-West and in New England. While they played Newark July 14, RBBB had been there May 19, almost two months earlier. And from now on where their paths did cross Sells-Floto tended to follow the Big One by a couple of months.



The backyard of the Sells Floto Circus in Ithaca, N.Y., July 23, 1919.

After Plainfield they moved to Easton, Pa., for July 16 where they had a late arrival, rain, no parade but fairly good business. The next day at Scranton they were again late arriving but did manage a parade and had splendid business. In both of these towns RBBB had also been ahead of them by about two months. They then moved into the "Southern Tier" of New York heading for their repeat date in Cleveland. At both Liberty and Norwich they did capacity business. Other New York towns the week of July 21 were Binghamton, Cortland, Ithaca, Auburn, Newark and Lockport. Then on July 28 they were again in Cleveland.

After Cleveland the show moved into Michigan for about two weeks. Jack Dempsey joined for two weeks at Fort Huron as a feature for the after show or concert. The Michigan tour, after two days in Detroit, August 1-2, were mostly smaller cities. Dempsey left after the Gary, Ind., date, August 16. The show now moved through Illinois into

This special newspaper ad was used during the two different periods Jack Dempsey appeared with the Sells-Floto Circus in 1919.

THIS IS THE BIG ONE—
PORT ARTHUR, TUESDAY, OCT 21

Down-town Seat Sale Circus Day ONLY at Kleins Drug Co.
Prices Same as Charged at Grounds.

Iowa where a two day stand, August 23-24, was played in Kansas City, where they had two turnaways on Saturday and two capacity houses on Sunday (one of only three Sundays played during the season). The side show had the best day of the season up to that time on Saturday. Both papers, the *Kansas City Post* and the *Kansas City Journal* gave the show excellent coverage with pictures, write-ups and flattering reviews. By Monday, September 1 they were in Springfield, Ill., doing great business for both the side show and big show.

With the middle of September and cooler weather approaching the show now began to move into the South. On October 13 they were in Memphis where they were not allowed to parade due to the coming of the Tri-State Fair and business was only so-so. A quick trip through Arkansas and Texas followed bringing them to Houston Saturday, September 20. But then trouble started. For the rest of the season they were plagued with rain and mud although between these problems and the resulting cancelled shows they did good business.

Starting Monday and Tuesday September 22-23 San Antonio and Austin were cancelled because of floods. The next two days in Waco and Corsicana they had heavy rains and poor business, while the next day at Waxahachie with still more rain they did good business. Thus while certainly no benefit rain did not always bring poor business. Finally the last day of the week at Denton the skies cleared. For a while after that the weather luck held but in Ballinger, October 6, the rains returned and the evening show was lost, while the next day at Coleman the ground was so muddy that the show could not get on the lot and the date had to be cancelled.

One week later on Tuesday, October 14 at Sulphur Springs, the lot was so soft that the first two wagons on the lot went down to their bottoms in the mud and it was immediately apparent that another day would be lost unless other arrangements could be made. After some quick bargaining they were able to get the use of the ball park across from the lot, and there they finally gave two shows, al fresco, in front of



This 1919 Strobridge bill for the Floto show was unusual as the word "circus" does not appear. Harold Dunn Collection.

the grandstand. Two days later at Tyler they had more rain, a soft lot, were unable to parade or give either show although they did get on the lot. Again, next day at Palestine there was more mud and rain.

Although Ringling-Barnum had been playing all around Texas for these first two weeks of October never once did the two shows play the same towns which in view of the weather trouble Sells-Floto was having was most fortunate. Any added troubles from the strong competition that Ringling-Barnum could have given might have been too much.

The next week started October 20, in Galveston. Now for a time the weather improved but other problems arose. The next stand at Port Arthur, only a relatively short run from Galveston, brought a wet lot from earlier rains, no parade and only an evening show. Then on Wednesday after another short run, they were late into Lake Charles, La., again resulting in no parade and a 4 p.m. matinee. However, the night show had them packed to the ring curbs. The next day at Lafayette for a change they had no troubles and played to two packed houses. Then they moved into New Orleans for their fourth two day stand of the season where they enjoyed two turnaway and two capacity houses.

What turned out to be the last two weeks of the season started Monday, October 27 at Hattiesburg, Miss., where they had another late arrival, no parade, and did not put up the big top although they did give two shows with the seats side walled. After playing Birmingham on the 30th they moved to Atlanta for another two day stand Friday and Saturday, October 31 and November 1, beating Ringling-Barnum which was due in on November 10 for just one day. After

Atlanta they moved back through Alabama and Mississippi getting to Baton Rouge Saturday, November 11.

The next day, Sunday, they were billed for Opelousa, La., but since it was raining when they arrived they cancelled the parade. It continued raining and after the matinee it was raining so hard they decided to cancel the evening show. In spite of this early start on the teardown the lot was so muddy and the wagons so bogged down that even with all the horse and elephant power available they were unable to move them off the lot that night. It was only after back breaking work by both man and beast that they were able to get the last wagon off the lot Tuesday morning. As a result of this and the fact that the lots in the remaining towns were all very muddy the show packed up and headed for home in Denver.

So the last four dates, Alexandria, Monroe, in Louisiana, and Pine Bluff and Hot Springs, in Arkansas, were lost although the first two would have been anyway because of the delay in Opelousa.

The trip back to Denver ended a season in which the show was reasonably successful in spite of some of the problems in the first month and those in the four or five weeks. And they did finally make it into the East in a big way as they had been promising to do for several years but never really had before. And while not the longest tour the show had made it was a respectable 14,557 miles.

ROUTE SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS 1919

April

17, Wichita Falls, Tex.; 18, Fort Worth; 19, Dallas; S; 21, Oklahoma City, Ok.; 22, Tulsa; 23, Bartlesville; 24, Coffeyville, Kan.; 25, Joplin, Mo.; 26, Springfield; S; 28, 29, 30, St. Louis.

May

1, 2, 3, St. Louis; S; 5, Indianapolis, Ind.; 6, Richmond; 7, Dayton, Oh.; 8, Columbus; 9, Akron; 10, Cleveland; S; 12, Buffalo, N.Y.; 13, Rochester; 14, Syracuse; 15, Utica;



This fine big top interior bill featured the "victory (of World War One) pageant" "Birth of the Rainbow." Harold Dunn Collection.

16, Albany; 17, Herkimer; S; 19, Hamilton, Ont.; 20, Toronto, Ont.; 21, Belleville; 22, Ottawa; 23, 24, Montreal; S; 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, Boston, Mass.; S.

June

2, Springfield; 3, Salem; 4, Lynn; 5, Gloucester; 6, Portsmouth, N.H.; 7, Portland, Me.; S; 9, Manchester, N.H.; 10, Lawrence, Mass.; 11, Pawtucket, R.I.; 12, Brockton, Mass.; 13, Newport, R.I.; 14, Framingham, Mass.; S; 16, Pittsfield; 17, Glens Falls, N.Y.; 18, Troy; 19, Greenfield, Mass.; 20, Gardner; 21, Haverhill; S; 23, Woonsocket, R.I.; 24, New London, Ct.; 25, Meriden; 26, Northampton, Mass.; 27, Bellows Falls, Vt.; 28, Montpelier; S; 30, Burlington.

July

1, Malone, N.Y.; 2, Massena Springs; 3, Gouverneur; 4, Watertown; 5, Carthage; S; 7, Kingston; 8, Newburg; 9, Middletown; 10, Englewood, N.J.; 11, New Brunswick; 12, Long Branch; S; 14, Newark; 15, Plainfield; 16, Easton, Pa.; 17, Scranton; 18, Liberty, N.Y.; 19, Norwich; S; 21, Binghamton; 22, Cortland; 23, Ithaca; 24, Auburn; 25, Newark; 26, Lockport; S; 28, Cleveland, Oh.; 29, Elyria; 30, Sandusky; 31, Adrian, Mi.

August

1, 2, Detroit; S; 4, Fort Huron; 5, Bad Axe; 6, Bay City; 7, Alma; 8, Greenville; 9, Grand Rapids; S; 11, Muskegon; 12, Traverse City; 13, Cadillac; 14, Kalamazoo; 15, Benton Harbor; 16, Gary, Ind.; S; 18, Aurora, Ill.; 19, Sterling; 20, Rock Island; 21, Ottumwa, Ia.; 22, Trenton, Mo.; 23, 24, Kansas City; 25, Carrollton; 26, Kirksville; 27, Carthage; 28, Monmouth, Ill.; 29, Aledo; 30, Peoria; S.

September

1, Springfield, Ill.; 2, Mattoon; 3, Linton; 4, Bloomington, Ind.; 5, Bedford; 6, Louisville, Ky.; S; 8, Nashville, Tenn.; 9, Bowling Green, Ky.; 10, Hopkinsville; 11, Paris, Tenn.; 12, Humboldt; 13, Memphis; S; 15, Little Rock, Ark.; 16, Texarkana; 17, Shreveport, La.; 18, De Ridder; 19, Beaumont, Tex.; 20, Houston; S; 22, San Antonio; 23, Austin; 24, Waco; 25, Corsicana; 26, Waxahachie; 27, Denton; S; 29, Cleburne; 30, Weatherford.

October

1, Ranger; 2, Abilene; 3, Sweetwater; 4, San Angelo; S; 6, Ballinger; 7, Coleman; 8, Brownwood; 9, Brady; 10, Comanche; 11, Stephenville; S; 13, Denison; 14, Sulphur Springs; 15, Mt. Pleasant; 16, Tyler; 17, Longview; 18, Palestine; S; 20, Galveston; 21, Port Arthur; 22, Lake Charles, La.; 23, Lafayette; 24, New Iberia; 25, 26, New Orleans; 27, Hattiesburg, Miss.; 28, Meridian; 29, Tuscaloosa, Ala.; 30, Birmingham; 31, Atlanta, Ga.

November

1, Atlanta; S; 3, Montgomery; 4, Mobile; 5, Gulfport, Miss.; 6, Jackson; S; 7, Natchez; 8, Baton Rouge, La.; S; The remaining towns of Opelousa; Alexandria; Monroe; Pine Bluff, Ark.; and Hot Springs were cancelled because of bad weather.

THE CIRCUS YEAR IN REVIEW, 1977

For the past few years the annual circus year review has been prepared by Don Marcks and it was hoped he could do it again this year, but unfortunately, due to pressing business and other problems, he was unable to do so. However, he did very kindly furnish the list of circuses which operated during 1977 and much of the information contained here was researched from his splendid weekly publication, **Circus Report**. Associate Editor, Joe Bradbury, aided by other members of the **Bandwagon** staff, has prepared the following season review which should be of some value especially to the circus historians in the future.

There was an old circus saying many years ago, "If you've seen one, you've seen them all." Of course it wasn't entirely true but there was a lot of truth in it. There was a remarkable similarity between shows, in physical appearance, composition and order of performance, and *modus operandi*. If someone familiar with the circus scene 40 years ago had, like Rip Van Winkle, gone in a deep sleep and then awakened in 1977 he would be astounded at the difference between individual circuses currently on the road. Back in 1937 practically every circus, large or small, looked pretty much alike and did it the same way. Back then, the season would open in the spring after a show had spent the last three or four months in winterquarters. Whether the show was motorized or on rails chances were the vehicles were painted red, the tents made of white canvas, and the big top had round ends with three to five middle pieces, the dimensions depending on the size of the show. Seating consisted of bleacher type (blues) on the ovals and individual chairs (reserves) on the sides. On the midway was a sideshow, same type of tent as the big top, only

The Red and white striped big top of the Stebbing Royal European Circus on the lot in Atlanta, Ga., June 14 and 15, 1977. Joe Bradbury photo.



smaller. Between the marquee and big top was a menagerie tent, also of the same type, larger than the sideshow, smaller than the big top. The smaller shows sometimes combined the sideshow and menagerie. The order of performance ran this way. Center ring concert by the band, followed by a candy pitch on most shows, then came the opening walkaround spec which in turn was followed by a succession of displays of various circus type acts. After the main performance was concluded, the aftershow, or concert, usually of a wild west type, took place. The season's route would be done in an orderly fashion with moves of 40-150 miles depending on size of the show, method of transportation, and territory being played. All in all there was a general sameness of all circuses.

Our Rip Van Winkle awakening in 1977 would be truly amazed at the variety of big tops he saw. Hoxie Bros. Big Top Circus had a completely round tent, Stebbing had a tent and marquee of the European style, Carson & Barnes a long, sausage type tent, similar to those of Kelly-Miller in the early 50's, only wider. Some tops were bale ring, others push pole, some square end dramatic show type, while others retained the conventional round end with middle pieces which was standard fare in 1937. As for colors there was nearly every shade of the rainbow. Hoxie's Great American had a solid red tent, Vargas had both an orange and a blue top, while others were red, white, and blue striped, red and white, red and yellow, green and white, orange and blue, you name it, some show had it in 1977. As for seating many shows didn't designate between general admission and blues and those that did got the added fee only because of the location as physically the seats were the same, bleacher type. There were several varieties of mechanical seat wagons, and only Beatty-Cole retained the traditional reserved chair type of seat. As for vehicle colors, again, take your



Martin & Downs Circus, a new show in 1977, toured Canada under the ownership of CHS Al Stencil. Paul Horsman photo.

pick. Some shows beautifully embellished their trucks with their titles and other decorations, while some had nothing which would even designate the vehicle as a circus truck. A few would have title decals on the cab doors but nothing else. The order of performance was as varied as other differences between the shows. Three large canvas circuses retained the traditional walkaround spec while Beatty-Cole, probably the most traditional of them all, had no spec at all. Although the Feds killed off the prize candy pitch some years ago, other variations were making a comeback and most shows had something to pitch, color books, autographed programs, peanuts with prizes, etc.

The *modus operandi* also varied widely. Some shows, such as the Acme units and Carson and Barnes, retained traditional winterquarters; while others, notably Vargas, halted only a few days in the winter before continuing to tour with a new performance edition. Some shows retained the standard sponsored, UPC format, which the Mills Brothers had pioneered in the 40's and ten years later had been adopted by practically every canvas show on the road, while

Circus Vargas ticket/office wagon in Downie, Ca., April 1977. This truck was lost in a fire in January, 1978. Pfening Collection.





other 1977 outfits had discarded this type of operation. Phone promotions were down, but on the way up in a rapidly accelerated manner was the deal to play shopping malls which Vargas had made popular over the past few seasons.

Obtaining sufficient information for a circus season review such as this is currently a most difficult task. Some 20 years ago when the old *Billboard* magazine was still in publication such a task would have been a snap. *Amusement Business*, the successor to *Billboard*, carried some circus news but not much. Don Marcks' little weekly publication, *Circus Report*, was by far the most informative medium for keeping up with the happenings in the circus world in 1977.

A full and complete list of circuses in 1977 is almost impossible to obtain but the list furnished here by Don Marcks is the best that could be compiled. He arranged the circuses into those playing under canvas and those which ordinarily play either indoors or outdoors in front of grandstands or other type of seating. A few of the latter category did at times play under canvas with rented tentage. Some of the indoor/outdoor type made full seasons such as the two Ringling-Barnum units, Hubert Castle, and others, while others actually played only a few weeks, some only a few stands. Some were little more than promotional shows and couldn't be classed as an organized circus.

Businesswise the overall 1977 circus season can be considered as fair. Most shows termed their season as spotted, some very good dates, some not so hot. Few, if any, really raved about

The American Big Top Circus White Unit traveled on 2 trucks and was the second unit operated by Gopher Davenport in 1977. Bill Rhodes photo.

business. The season as compared to some others in the recent past could be described as somewhat dull, not too much exciting news coming from the land of the big tops.

The list of canvas circuses on the road in 1977 is as follows:

American Big Top (formerly Dailey Bros.) (one to three units)

Circus Vargas
Dixiana Circus (also at times titled Strong and Luvas)

Dubsky Bros. & Jordan
Famous Hunt

Hanneford Family Circus
Happytime Dog and Pony Circus

Hoxie Bros. Circus
Hoxie's Great American Circus

King Bros.-Cole Combined
Hagan-Wallace-Sells & Gray Com-

bined
Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros.

Roberts Bros.
Royal Ranch Wild West

Stebbing Royal European
Big John Strong & Son

Carson and Barnes
Circus Kirk

Booker's Early American Circus
Fisher Bros. Circus

Franzen Bros. Circus
Van Bros. Circus

Martin & Downs Circus (Canada)

The American Big Top Circus Blue Unit, operated by John "Gopher" Davenport, moved on straight trucks, avoiding taxes on semis. Taken in West Point, Ky. Bill Rhodes photo.



Puck's Canadian Traveling Circus (Canada)

Dewayne Bros.

The list of canvas shows seemed to be growing a little each year and is most impressive when compared with the roster of tenters some 10 years ago when the number dwindled to about 7.

Clifford E. Vargas, owner of Circus Vargas, continued to dominate the news from the canvas field in 1977. His show had grown steadily and now advertised itself to be the nation's largest under canvas circus. Beatty-Cole and Carson & Barnes made the same claim and Hoxie Bros. wasn't too far behind. This quartet was definitely in a class by themselves, and after them came King Bros.-Cole, Hagan-Wallace-Sells & Gray, Hoxie's Great American, and the rest of the pack. Not only had the growth of the Vargas show been the talk of the circus world but also its method of operation. Vargas had tossed aside the sponsor-UPC formula for doing business and after a cautious beginning had now gone full speed into playing shopping centers in major population areas and in 1977 was now playing 95 percent of his dates in these malls. Vargas had been looked on rather curiously by several of the old hat type of circusman when he went to such gimmicks as free children's tickets, playing "blue sky" without sponsorship, and routing his show back and forth across the country as if gasoline still sold for 1937 prices. Some in 1977 still couldn't figure out why Vargas hadn't gone broke long ago, but he knew what he was doing and his formula was now being copied by many of his early critics.

New features for the 1977 Vargas show included a beautiful Appaloosa liberty act which was purchased from J.A. (Chief Joseph) Hofmeister and a great 9 piece band led by Jim Gibson which played traditional circus music. The show opened in Atlanta for a 3 day stand beginning January 6 and played during extremely cold weather. The first evening show was given in 28 degree temperature and this was the warmest of the three nights. Final evening when it dipped to 8 above the show had to cancel out, however, very strong business was done at some of the matinees. Next the show went westward through Alabama, Mississippi, and on to Texas. Enroute to the Lone Star State the show encountered cold, rainy, and windy weather. With a break from the weatherman the show had a great 4 day stand in Beaumont, playing to 66,000 in 11 performances. Business was also strong in Galveston and Houston. On February 8 at Brownsville, Vargas took delivery of a new royal blue colored big top, a 160 ft. round with three 50's. This was the size big top Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sells-Floto, and John Robinson used back in the hey-

day of the 20's. It became the show's policy to use the new top only when it was set up on blacktop surfaces. While on dirt, the old orange colored top would go into the air. Moving on across Texas the show went into Arizona and was at Tuscon, March 25-28, and then on to California where it played Redlands and from April 1-3 was in Hollywood. The show also played inside Los Angeles proper, the first time a tenter had done that in many seasons.

Animal welfare agencies and numerous "do gooder" groups gave Pat Anthony such a hard time while in Southern California he had to leave the show hurriedly when it appeared seizure of his animals was imminent. These groups were becoming more vocal and apparently stronger all the time and created problems for a number of circuses and wild animal trainers and exhibitors in 1977.

Vargas worked its way up the Pacific Coast and went into Canada where it made a trans-continental tour of the Dominion playing many spots which had not seen a large canvas show since the days of Dailey Bros., Clyde Beatty, and King-Cristiani in the late 40's and early 50's. Despite some bad weather the show had good crowds during much of its Canadian tour. Gustly winds at Quebec City blew down the sideshow/menagerie but there were no injuries and little damage. The Maritimes were said to have been highly profitable but overall the Canadian trip was short of expectations.

Back in the states in the early fall the show headed south for several weeks and the region generally produced good business. In October the show was carrying 16 elephants which included 4 owned by Rex Williams who was hired to take over the bull herd. Back in July it was reported the Vargas show had added several animals to its menagerie, including 2 wallabies, 2 foxes, baby zebra, baby buffalo, baby yak, etc.

New equipment added during the season included a trailer home for Vargas himself, a comfort station, and concession trailer. The show, which for the past few years had toured with rather plain, orange painted vehicles, began a program to decorate the trucks in a fancy, circus style, and before the end of the season one elephant semi had been very attractively painted and lettered.

The show closed the season on December 14 in Florida, having been on the road for 50 weeks and only 14 days off, travelling approximately 20,000 miles. Many very long jumps were made, including one in Canada of 400 miles in length but it was accomplished with only one day enroute. After the season was concluded Vargas killed the rumors that he would field two units in 1978.



The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Blue Unit moved on 37 cars in 1977, consisting of 7 flats, 2 tunnel cars, 1 double deck, 4 stock cars and 23 sleepers. Taken in Louisville, Ky. Bill Rhodes photo.

The three Acme Circus Corporation (Frank McCloskey, Jerry Collins) units, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros., King Bros., and Sells & Gray, quartered in DeLand, Florida. All were on the road in 1977 as they had been for a number of seasons. During the preceding fall and early winter the rumor boys were at it again and for some reason always seemed to pick on the Acme units, usually having Beatty-Cole going off the road or some drastic change being made in its operation, but their great favorite was to have the two smaller shows, King Bros. and Sells & Gray combined. The latter rumor always did look a little silly as what was there to combine other than the elephant herds, animals, etc. as two cookhouse trucks, two canvas spools, etc. would look rather strange on a show and it'd take an accomplished sailmaker to convert two 80 ft. round tops into a 160. This time, however, the rumors that there would be some changes in the Acme shows bore fruit. King Bros.' title was changed to King Bros.-Cole Combined and Sells & Gray had a new moniker, Hagan-Wallace-Sells & Gray, the forepart being obtained through arrangement with Dub Duggan who toured a show by that name back in the

The Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus made a rare under canvas stand using a Florida Tent Rental blue and white big top in Louisville, Ky., in 1977. Bill Rhodes photo.



1950's. The new titles were given so as to beef up their image in the public eye since the smaller shows would be picking up many of the dates formerly made by Beatty-Cole. The large show would have a new format, that of playing major shopping centers, with only a few of its sponsored dates retained. David Mobb, formerly with Ringling-Barnum, the Freedom Train, and Hoxie Bros., was hired and named national marketing director and given the job of lining up the new shopping center dates. Later in the season Doug Lyon of Vargas was signed as vice president in charge of marketing to beef up the team promoting the malls. Beatty-Cole was essentially the same size as in past seasons, using a 150 with three 50's big top which had been new in the spring of 1976. The show carried 9 elephants, a camel, several horses and ponies, a semi of caged wild animals displayed in the sideshow-menagerie, and hippo and snake shows on the midway. David Hoover worked on the opening wild animal act in the steel arena continuing the tradition began when the late Clyde Beatty was still on the show. Business at the new mall dates which were usually 2 or more days in length was spotty most of the season. There was, for example, a good take at the Columbus and Albany, Ga., dates, very good business at Lynchburg, Va., but it was poor pickin's at Laurel, Md.

The traditional big stand at Philadelphia in which the lot was shared with the Amusements of America carnival was held May 20-30. After Philly came a couple of dates in Maryland and then there were 4 consecutive stands in New Jersey followed by a June 20-22 engagement at Lake



The gorilla show on Hoxie's Great American Circus had a fine new front for the 1977 tour. Taken in Reynoldsburg, Ohio. Pfening photo.



CHS Jerry Booker's Early American Circus opened in San Mateo, Ca., in Sept. 1977. The new big top was red and white striped. Jerry Booker photo.

Grove, Long Island. The last week in June and first half of July saw the show in New England, after which came a series of stands in New York State. A storm hit the show at Rochester, N.Y., July 31, and leveled the big top and sideshow. Fortunately it struck late in the afternoon after the matinee was over. Although the big top was heavily damaged it was patched up and made to last the rest of the season. August saw the show in shopping centers in Pennsylvania and Ohio and it travelled as far west as Indiana before heading south in the latter part of September through Kentucky and during October played dates in Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The show was in New Orleans Oct. 27-30 and shortly thereafter headed on the home route through Mississippi and the Florida panhandle. Final date was at Deerfield Beach, Nov. 12-13. The route had taken it some 8667 miles. In the fall the show had see-saw business but the management was very high on the success of the new format of playing shopping malls. In December Frank McCloskey named W.J. (Bill) English as general agent of all three Acme shows, replacing Joe McMahon who resigned December 1. McCloskey said the policy of playing shopping malls without sponsorship or phone promotion had shown great promise and would continue next season. Success was credited to the efforts of Doug Lyon and Timothy Stinson. Johnny Pugh would continue as general manager of the show.

King Bros.-Cole, the No. 2 show in the Acme fold, again had B.H. "Whitey" Black as manager. The new title was used on newspaper ads as well as on some posters and window cards but the vehicles were not relettered. A new big top, 90 with three 40's, was delivered by Leaf prior to the opening at Apopka, Fla., April 8. A

stronger performance, including the Flying Padillas, flying act, gave the show a boost as did the return to live music which featured Marcia and Tex Maynard on the organ and drums.

The show started out with 3 elephants and while on tour sold one of them to a zoo. Tex Maynard left in July for several weeks and during this time the music was provided by Jerry Mass. King-Cole continued with its old formula of sponsored dates with phone promotion in some spots.

After the opening the show played two more dates in Florida and then

CHS Ray Dirgo provided new artwork for the letterheads and newspaper ads of the King Bros. Cole/Combined Circus in 1977. This ad was used in Bridgeton, N.J. in July. Bill Elbirt Collection.

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headed north playing on the way 7 dates in Georgia, 4 in South Carolina, and 8 in North Carolina during the remainder of April. In May the show played in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, and after the middle of the month headed into its familiar territory in New Jersey. A number of New York State dates were made and in mid June a tour of New England was begun in which stands in all of the states in the region would be visited with exception of Maine. The week of July 18-22 found the show making 5 dates on Long Island. August was spent in the New Jersey-New York area which annually sees more circuses than any other part of the country. Late August found King-Cole going westward into Ohio and Indiana then it headed south through Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. A westward trek into Mississippi and Louisiana came in late September and the show remained in those parts until it headed back to Florida, entering its home state at Chipley, October 13. Final stand of the season came at its quarters town, Deland, on November 13. The show had put in 15,936 miles during the season.

Hagan-Wallace-Sells & Gray with Wilson Storey in his 10th season as manager, like the King-Cole show, returned to live music, furnished by Kay and Bob Parker on the organ and drums. The 1976 King Bros. big top, an 80 with three 40's, push pole top from Leaf, was used. The show's new moniker was put on newspaper ads, posters, and window cards but the 14 trucks continued to carry only the Sells & Gray portion of the title. The show opened April 4 at Brooksville, Fla., then played 10 more stands in the Sunshine state, 5 in Alabama, 9 in Georgia, and 1 in Tennessee during the remainder of the month. In May the show worked its way further

northward through Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, and in June was in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York. Moving west in July the show played in Pennsylvania and Ohio, then went north into Michigan. August saw several more dates in Michigan, a return to Indiana, and then a 15 stand trek through Illinois and on into Iowa for 3 dates. On September 1 the show was back in Illinois at Freeport with 8 more stands in the state to follow. In mid September the show moved south through Kentucky, Missouri, and Arkansas. In early October it went west into Kansas for 3 stands, 6 in Oklahoma, and back into Arkansas and on November 1 was at Columbia, Miss. Heading toward its home base the show played through Mississippi and Alabama and had 5 dates in Florida with final stand coming November 13 at Dunnellon. Total mileage for the season was 13,961. During the tour a number of dates were played at hospitals and military installations.

In an interview in the Dec. 3, 1977 *Amusement Business* Magazine manager Wilson Storey said business for the season had been fair, with some very good towns being played and some which were just plain lemons. All dates were sponsored with phones used in some spots. Telephone crews were shared by Beatty-Cole and King-Cole. Storey blamed the poor Illinois take on a light corn crop due to the drought. He also said people had become more conservative and were not spending as much. In addition to the big top the show had a 60 x 90 sideshow which housed 2 elephants and a cage truck with a lion, tiger, leopard, and monkey.

Dorey Miller, owner of Carson & Barnes, also claimed to have had the largest canvas show on the road, and if the number of elephants carried was the criteria for judgement he would win by a landslide as he had 34 of the huge beasts on the road with the show and rented several more to other showmen. Also, the Carson & Barnes

big top while not the widest was certainly the longest, being a six center pole 140 ft. round with five 40's. The tent which had orange and blue stripes on the top and a red and yellow striped sidewall was made in Mexico and new at the beginning of the season. Carson & Barnes also carried a large free menagerie, the many animals being displayed in the open area between the marquee and big top. Included were numerous specimens of "lead stock", camels, llamas, zebras, miniature donkeys, goats, and sheep plus a dozen cages with black bear, hyena, lions, tigers, and leopards.

The rolling stock was painted in large red and white stripes, same color scheme which had been used for several seasons, but this year a colorful title logo was placed on the cab doors of the tractors. Only the ticket wagon was colorfully lettered and scrolled.

Carson & Barnes opened March 1 at Huntsville, Ala., then played through Mississippi and Arkansas and later worked its way eastward. It was in the Washington, D.C. area in July. Moving back into more familia when the elephant, Barbara, took off on a 4 mile escapade in and around Prairie du Sac, Wis., August 26, and ended up going right through a nursing home in an adjacent town. Although the publicity put the show's name before the public coast to coast Barbara did some \$80,000 in damages on two such jaunts. On October 21 near Mayfield, Ky., one of the large semis carrying 4 elephants overturned injuring the driver but none of the animals were hurt.

The show went on down into the deep south and was in the Atlanta area in mid-October. The suburban town of Snellville, which had grown from a

The Hoxie Bros. Circus big top billows to the ground after an early Sunday show in 1977. The elephant in foreground had already pulled most of the stakes. This top was lost in a blowdown later in the season. Bill Rhodes photo.

crossroads in recent years on account of the flight from the city, gave terrific business. The show, sponsored by Jaycees, was located on a lot right in the middle of the athletic field in a local park. A subsequent 3 day stand at the old Lakewood Park lot in Atlanta, the first circus to play the site since the early 60's, saw it soaked in heavy rains and have rather slim pickin's. Shifting population trends, change in character of the surrounding neighborhood around the site of the old Southeastern Fair, once one of the largest anywhere, told a story which circus men in 1977 were constantly learning. The old spots which were so prosperous 15-20 years ago had changed. The money had moved to the suburbs and in these more prosperous neighborhoods was where the gold was to be found. In the proper spots, like Snellville, where the locals had money and live wire civic organizations were flourishing, a show moving in, even if it was the first circus anyone could ever recall playing the town could find the take substantial.

Carson & Barnes in 1977 was unique in that it was now the only really large tented circus still making under canvas stands daily. Both Vargas and Beatty-Cole had a regular fare of multi date stands and Hoxie Bros. was adding more all the time.

L.B. "Hoxie" Tucker again had both of his circuses on the road. The larger show, titled Hoxie Bros. Big Top, began the season with its two center pole completely round big top which had been designed by John Hall and built by Leaf in the spring of 1975. This year, John Hall, road manager of the show for the past several seasons, remained in quarters as booking manager, while George Hodgdon served as road manager. The show carried 9 elephants but 1 died later in the fall. A feature of the performance was Michael Cecere, 19 years old, billed as the world's youngest lion trainer. The show also had a large gorilla, Mongo, housed in the former Ringling-Barnum cage originally built for Toto,





and was the outstanding attraction in the sideshow-menagerie managed by Roger Boyd Jr. Also in the tent was a cage semi with a tiger, grizzly bear, a large baboon, and several chimps. A four piece band played the performance. The equipment was freshly painted while in Miami quarters and presented a most pleasing appearance on opening day at West Palm Beach, Fla., March 19. The show claimed excellent business in the south as it went northward playing 14 stands in Florida, 8 in Georgia, 4 in South Carolina, 5 in North Carolina, 1 in Tennessee, 5 in Kentucky and 2 in West Virginia. It was at Huntington, W. Va. May 1, then for rest of the month played other dates in that state, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. June 1 saw the show at Plymouth, Ind., and during remainder of the month there was a heavy concentration of dates in Ohio, 18 in all. In July the show was back in its familiar territory in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. All of August was spent in Jersey, certainly the most worked circus territory in the nation. It was late in September when Hoxie finally left the state and started south through Maryland, Virginia, and on into the Carolinas.

A blowdown at Sussex, N.J., September 2, completely destroyed the 3 year old big top, the 160 ft. round blue and white striped top which had been a Hoxie trade mark since the show

The longest big top used in 1977 was this one on Carson & Barnes Circus. Taken in Lakewood Park, Atlanta, Ga. Joe Bradbury photo.

went to this type of tent some years ago. It was planned to get the old single center pole round top out of storage in quarters and use it but it was found it wasn't in good enough condition, so the show put into use for the remainder of the season the canopy type top which had come from the Diamond S. Rodeo Wild West Show of 1976. In 1977 Hoxie used 22 trucks, new ones being a large truck carrying the wild animal act wagons, one for baby elephants, and a utility semi. Roster included 15 semis and 7 straight jobs. The elephant "Sue" died shortly before the end of the season and several trucks stolen while the show was on tour were later recovered. All dates were sponsored, including a few shopping center stands. Phones were used at some stands. At the conclusion of the season Tucker said that the tour had been a success and the larger show had enjoyed much better business than the year before.

Tucker's No. 2 show, titled Hoxie's Great American Circus, used 11 show-owned trucks painted red, white and blue. Bill Hill was road manager and 3 elephants were carried. Other animals included 1 camel and 2 horses. An ape show using a carnival type front replaced the traditional sideshow on the midway and featured a gorilla, two large chimps, and a huge orangutan. The season began April 2 at Cutler Ridge, Florida, and the initial month saw the show playing a total of 8 Florida stands before going north into Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. In May it continued to play in the Carolinas and went rapidly across Virginia and into New Jersey, the territory Hoxie liked best. After a lengthy tour of the state the show went into Pennsylvania and played some 27 continuous dates and it was early August before it moved on to Ohio. Returning east the show played 3 days at the West Virginia State Fair and then moved back into its Pennsylvania and New Jersey area. It remained there until finally moving south October 1 at Taneytown, Md. Six dates in Virginia, one in North Carolina, and 13 in South Carolina followed with final stand of the season coming at Denmark, S.C., October 15. Both Hoxie units returned to Miami quarters.

Big John Strong's Circus opened April 1 at Oxnard, Calif., which was several weeks later than usual because the show eliminated most of its long time school dates. The show had a new red, white, and blue colored big top from Leaf, an 80 with two 20's and one 30. Rolling stock consisted of two large semis, one straight bed truck, and a canvas spool. The show carried 2 horses, 4 ponies, 6 dogs, a llama, and Neena, the elephant. A new policy was begun in which rather than use phone promotions as in the past the show relied heavily on newspaper, radio, and TV advertising, and after several weeks with the new format Big John said the change had paid off and his show had enjoyed capacity crowds at many stands in California. Early routing carried it quickly into northern California, then it moved back into the southern portions of the state, and a few weeks later started eastward through Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. In July the show was in Ohio. Big John was quoted that after the first half of the season the show's business had generally been good. A few bad days had been encountered and during June and July there had been rain and mud nearly every day. Before the end of the season the show had moved back to its California quarters.

The Famous Hunt Circus, now in its third season, following its revival by Marsha Hunt Jones and her husband, Don, opened its tour, April 25, at Burlington, N.J. The red, white, and blue big top was an 85 ft. square end, bale ring type, with one 42 ft. middle. Transporting the show were 3 semis, and 3 straight bed trucks all pulling trailers, plus a newly added bus sleeper for workmen. Animals carried included 1 elephant, 2 horses, a camel, llama, and variety of sheep and goats used in a petting zoo set-up. The first week in New Jersey was spotty, with 2 days of packed houses, 2 with fair crowds, and 2 blanks. The early weeks saw a critical help situation and the show also had considerable bad weather and a number of late arrivals. Later the show moved into New England and following two weeks at Crescent Park in Riverside, R.I. the tented portion of the season came to a close in August. Afterwards a number of dates were played in shopping malls

Van Bros. Circus was one of the smallest on tour in 1977. The one ring side walled show provided seating for 250 people. Taken in Endicott, Nebr. Bill Green photo.



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on Long Island, including several indoors. A "for sale" ad was placed in the October 8 issue of *Amusement Business* but Marsha Hunt Jones later said the ad didn't mean the show was selling out entirely but that it would go to a different format in 1978, mainly playing longer stands in order to cut over the road expenses. The exact plans of the show were still somewhat undetermined at the close of the year.

Bill Stebbing, owner of Stebbing Royal European Circus, opened his show in January at the South Florida Fair in West Palm Beach, Fla. The red and white big top was an 85 with one 40 ft. middle and a European style walkthrough marquee was used. The show later began a 6 weeks tour of Texas on April 18 at Nederland and concluded the dates at Newton on May 29. Next, stands were played in Louisiana and a long move took the show for a two day engagement in Atlanta, Ga., June 15-16. While in Atlanta Stebbing departed for Las Vegas to begin negotiations for the purchase of Polack Bros. Indoor Circus and sent his canvas show back to Sarasota quarters. Stebbing purchased Polack Bros. on July 8, the deal covering the title, equipment, and contracts. He said his plan was to operate both shows and in the fall the canvas circus returned to the road to play a number of fairs. Polack played its dates already booked and Stebbing was trying to sign a number of new stands for the show in 1978.

During the winter John Frazier, who had been associated with Royal Bros. in Canada, purchased Fisher Bros. Circus which was quartered in Ruskin, Fla. The show opened its season early in the spring with a new blue and yellow big top from Anchor, an 80 ft. round with one 30 ft. middle (according to some reports, others say it was a 90 with one 40.)

The sideshow-menagerie was a square end tent equipped with a canvas bannerline. The show carried 3 elephants, 1 llama, trained bear, 1 tiger, 2 large baboons, and 2 lion cubs, all of which were placed in the sideshow-menagerie along with two platform acts. The show travelled on 5 semis, 1 spool truck, and 1 straight truck with a trailer for concessions. The light plant was mounted on a cage semi in the sideshow. Frazier used some posters and other advertising but did not publicize his route so it is very difficult to trace. However, the show did move northward from Florida and played in Vermont and other New England states in August and observers reported there were some straw houses in that area. In the fall the show played dates in Louisiana and Texas and presumably would winter in south Texas.

Another change in ownership took place during the winter when Gordon Walsh purchased the Mid America Cir-

cus and changed the name to Kelly Bros. The new show which was quartered in Tulsa, Okla., used the big top which had been on Mid America in 1976, an 80 ft. round with one 40. No sideshow was carried but on the midway was an elephant ride and Moon Walk. Neil Franzen was with the show and worked a baby elephant in the performance. The show played Texas and Oklahoma stands in the spring and in August was in Kansas. A significant date was at Bloomington, Ill., August 10, when the show day and dated Hagan-Wallace-Sells & Gray.

Robert and Doris Earl's Roberts Bros. Circus had a 60 ft. round with three 30's big top and was transported on 2 semis, 7 straight bed trucks, and 4 cargo trailers. On the midway was Jack Gabbie's Snake Show and Moon Bounce. According to the owners the first six weeks of the season gave some terrific business, although there were a few light days at the beginning and some weak dates in West Virginia. The show played extensively through the Virginia-Maryland peninsula and an interesting stand was the one on Tangier Island off the Virginia coast, July 16. It was the first time an elephant had ever set foot on the island. The trip was made on the vessel, *Anthony Cline*. The show did not play any Sunday dates, now a rarity with most shows.

John "Gopher" Davenport changed the name of his tent from Dailey Bros. to American Big Top Circus and during the 1977 season at times was reported to have operated as many as three different units, all using the same title. Davenport's main show, the "Red" unit, opened in the Houston, Texas, area on January 10, then played for several weeks in the south Texas valley region under a green and white big top, a new 60 with two 30's. Vehicles included 6 trucks and 5 privately owned units. Mel Silverlake



Wayne Franzen and his young elephant OKA on Franzen Bros. Circus in 1977. The show included a lion act in the performance. Bill Rhodes photo.

was with it serving as announcer of the performance. The show had 2 elephants, camel, horse, several ponies and other animals. In April it was reported the show had made many dates in Texas and was now in Oklahoma. So far it had found some good business. A sideshow was later added with Mel Silverlake as manager. The No. 2 "white" unit opened May 30 at Mundon, Ill., and was managed by Jim Silverlake. That show had a 60 x 90 big top and a 20 x 40 sideshow. It carried 1 elephant, llama, pony, and trained chimp. In August it was reported that there were now three Davenport owned shows in operation and that the elephant "Baby Boo" had been purchased from Dick Lunsford who had formerly operated Royson Bros. Circus. Gopher claimed he now had a total of 5 elephants and would purchase another which would enable him to place 2 with each unit. It is difficult to determine the dates and route of the three units, but one went out through Montana, Wyoming and the Dakotas playing many Shrine sponsored stands. After a successful

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tour of Illinois and Iowa the "white" unit was said to have closed at Clarion, Iowa, July 14, after having opened May 28 at North English, Iowa. The Red unit made a tour of Ohio and was at Waynesville, Ohio, September 17. Observers said the show that day had but one elephant. At one time during the season there were a number of the Silverlake family with the Davenport shows, including Melvin, Jimmy, Josephine, and Brownie. It was reported that Brownie died September 15 while on tour.

Franzen Bros., owned by Wayne Franzen, travelled on 8 trucks and played extensively through Illinois and later made a tour of Wisconsin. It was at Baraboo, June 14. The show had a nice herald, posters, and was well advertised. It had grown into a neatly framed, family operated circus.

In the early months of 1977 Peter Luvass and Gary Strong purchased the Dixiana Circus from Charles Koehler. The show opened March 10 at Azie, Texas, using the new title of Strong and Luvass Circus. Later it made some dates in Louisiana. The show travelled on 4 trucks and had an elephant named Kenya. It found the early going rough and reports had it that one date in Missouri in April had been cancelled. Another report said the show played Monroe, La., without any kind of promotion and two days later it went back into quarters to reorganize. In June the show returned to the road using the original title of Dixiana Circus and played weekend stands around Beaumont, Texas. From then on the show's route was difficult to trace and it was last accounted for playing a stand at Breau Ridge, La., on August 21.

Jerry Booker, who had been dabbling around with circus business for some years, including restoring several former Hagenbeck-Wallace baggage wagons which he displayed at fairs, went into full time under canvas operation with a neatly framed show titled, Early American Circus. It played its initial engagement at San Mateo, Calif., August 29-Sept. 5 and featured a regular circus performance including an old time wild west aftershow, or concert, a real novelty in 1977.

The George Hanneford, Jr. Circus presented an under canvas show for the winter and spring season at the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota. Later it played several weeks at various fairs.

DeWayne Bros., a canvas circus, which ordinarily played the Pacific Coast on a route extending from California to Alaska was at Saanich, Canada, on April 16 when a section of seats fell causing 6 persons to be hospitalized. At the time the show was said to have a new big top but its route for the remainder of the season was not

publicized and no information on it is available for this report.

The Happytime Dog and Pony Circus was another show that played in California under canvas.

Circus Kirk, operated by Dr. Charles Boas, continued with its standard policy of some years standing of using acts with young performers of high school and college age including a nice 6 piece band. The show had an 80 ft. round with one 40 ft. middle big top and a sideshow equipped with a canvas bannerline. Considerable equipment, including poles, had come from the former Mills Bros. Circus when they cleaned out the old Jefferson, Ohio, quarters some years ago. Circus Kirk played in eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, its regular territory, then moved into New England for a few weeks. In the fall it dipped further south than ever before, playing through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida, and was expected to go into quarters in the Tampa area in December. Boas returned the show to East Berlin, Pa., and filed a plea for involuntary dissolution, stating that the show was insolvent. The equipment was to be sold by the bankruptcy court.

Little or nothing was heard from Royal Ranch Wild West Circus. Some reports said the show did go on the road but the route was not publicized and we are unable to provide anything about the circus which had been operated by Ozzie Schlentz for the past few years.

In Canada there were two home based canvas shows, and two others from the States which played stands in the Dominion in 1977, Vargas and DeWayne Bros.

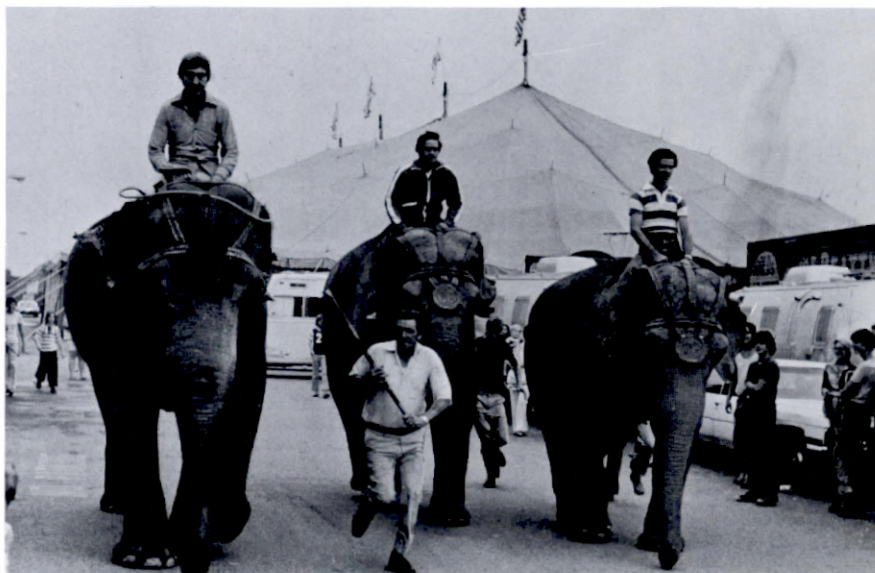
The Beatty Cole Circus used elephant races as a promotion for unsponsored dates in 1977. Bull boss Fred Logan leads the pack. Bill Rhodes photo.

During the winter as previously mentioned, John Frazier and Al Stencil, who had operated Royal Bros. split up. Frazier purchased Fisher Bros. and Stencil remained in charge of the Royal Bros. equipment. The title of Stencil's show was changed to Martin and Downs Circus, the name of which brings to mind a well known showman by the name of Martin Downs who operated Sells & Downs in 1905 and Cole Bros. 1906-09. The show, which was quartered at Campbellford, Ontario, opened in May in Marmora, Ontario and toured through several Canadian provinces. It was in Nova Scotia in July. The show had a new big top, a 70 with two 30's, equipped with a 30 x 20 marquee. Sideshow was a 30 x 50. Performance was given in two rings and seating consisted of 7 high blues with capacity of about 1,000. Transportation included three semis, 1 straight truck, 1 trailer, and a bus for cookhouse and sleeper.

The other Canadian tenter was titled Puck's Canadian Traveling Circus and was owned by Mark Parr and Frazier Mohawk. It opened in Ontario on May 21 and reportedly had a good season. Edward Russell, formerly with the George W. Matthews Circus, served as general manager. Much of the physical equipment was purchased from the Wallace and Rogers Circus which after, the death of Johnny Hartzell, Sr., did not go out and was sold off piecemeal. The Puck big top was a 90 with one 40.

The second list of circuses printed here are those which did not primarily play under canvas. Some of them played indoors exclusively, others outdoors exclusively, and some a combination of both. Still others while usually playing in arenas did make a few under canvas dates.

American Continental
Carden-Johnson-Clyde Bros.
Hubert Castle





Circus Carol (formerly Rudy Bros.)
 Cole All Star TV Circus
 Jose Cole Circus
 Europorama
 L.N. Fleckles
 Garden Bros.
 Hamid-Morton
 Hetzer's European Circus
 Holiday Hippodrome
 Polack Bros. Circus
 Sam T. Polack
 Royal Hanneford Circus (Tommy Hanneford)
 Van Bros.
 Wenatchee Youth Circus
 Great Y Circus
 Williams & Cole
 International All Star
 Kaye Continental Circus
 Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus (both under canvas and indoor)
 M & M Circus International
 Patterson Bros.
 Ringling-Barnum (Red and Blue Units)
 U.S.A. National Circus
 Voorheis Bros.
 Wallenda Circus
 William Kay Circus
 TNT and Royal Olympic
 Circus Odyssey
 Otto Berolini
 Royal Lichtenstein
 Pickle Family

The non canvas list of circuses was again headed by the two units of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Each season the shows seemed to add more railroad cars and now both the Red and Blue were up to 37 cars each. It was hard to realize that the circus which the Felds had purchased from John Ringling North and other members of the Ringling family back in 1967 had used only about 22 railroad cars. Now the two Ringling shows had almost three and a half times more cars. A survey of the Blue unit in 1977 showed the 37 cars consisted of 3 tunnel cars, 7 flats, 4 stocks, and 23 sleepers (storage and pie cars included). Animals carried included 17 elephants, 16

The Sells & Gray title appeared on the trucks of the Hagen-Wallace & Sells & Gray Circus. Photo taken in Lancaster, Ohio. Pfening photo.

tigers, 40 horses, 12 ponies, 2 camels, 2 llamas, and 10 polar bears. Workingmen travelling with the Blue show consisted of 25 for the prop crew, 17 wardrobe, 8 transportation, 8 labor, 25 ring stock, 7 elephants, 10 train crew, and a concession staff of 50.

The Red unit surveyed at Philadelphia showed the 37 cars consisted of 2 tunnel cars, 1 bi-level car, 5 stocks, 7 flats, and 22 sleepers, utility and pie cars. Actually the show arrived in Philadelphia with only 36 cars but the 37th, another sleeper, was added while the show was in the city.

The Red unit with the new 107th Edition program opened at Venice, Fla., quarters Dec. 30, 1976. The top feature act was Gunther Gebel-Williams' new 15 leopard number which he had been perfecting for many months. Other new, highly acclaimed acts were those of Dolly Jacobs, 20 year old daughter of veteran clown, Lou Jacobs, in an aerial number, and Tina Gebel, daughter of Gunther and Sigrid, who worked a liberty horse routine. One longtime act which was missing from the 107th edition was Wolfgang Holzmayer and his lions, who after 8 seasons with the show, returned to Europe where he joined the Cirque Amar in France. Several days after the opening in Venice the performance was taped for the annual TV show which was aired on March 15 with Gene Kelly as host commentator. Baker Brown was road manager of the Red unit until September 18 when he was named overall manager of both units, and Dean McMurray became road manager for the Red show. The show had stiff opposition in Cincinnati with the Syrian Shrine Temple Circus which was produced by the Royal Hanneford show. The Red unit went on to the west coast where Fresno,

California, was one of the best stands played in that area. Oakland and San Francisco drew well but not as good as did the Blue unit in those cities the previous year. While in San Diego, U.S. Immigration authorities arrested 10 aliens who were hiding out in one of the circus cars and the event made the national press wires.

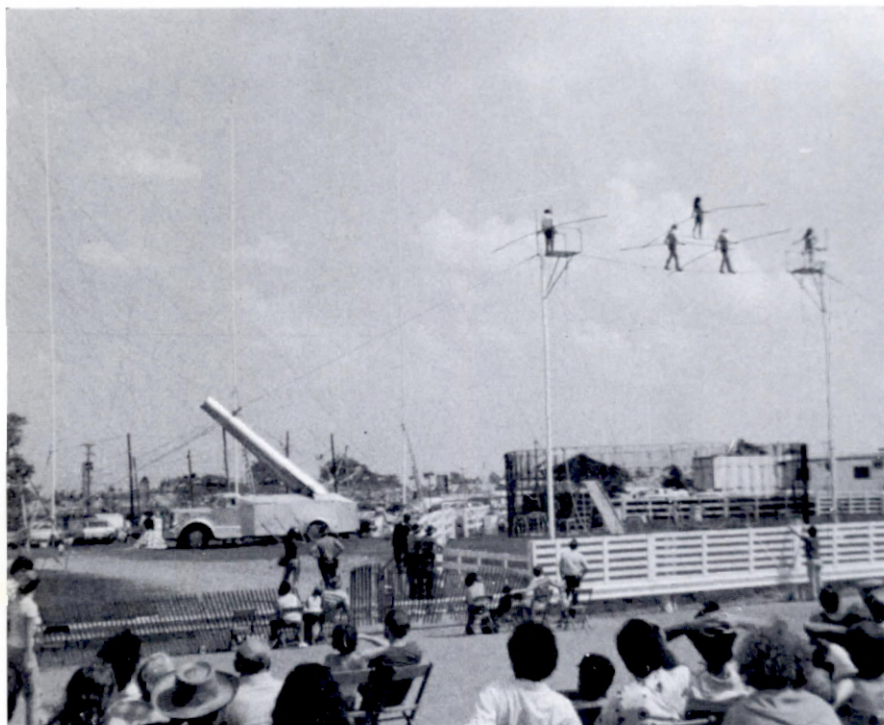
While playing the Forum in Inglewood, Calif., night of July 20, Daniel Acosta, a member of the famed Carillo Brothers act, fell from the high wire and was critically injured. This was the most serious accident suffered by a performer on either unit in 1977.

The Blue unit with Lloyd Morgan Jr. as road manager opened the season with a Jan. 31-Feb. 2 date in Venice, Florida. New dates played by Blue in 1977 came at Portland, Maine, and Wheeling, W. Va. Particularly strong stands played during the season were at Ashville, N.C., Fayetteville, N.C., Tulsa, Okla., and Little Rock, Ark.

An unhappy situation which had been brewing for several years blew up early in the season. This was over the union regulation concerning the show's bands in which only 3 permanent musicians were carried and the circus forced to hire from 12 to 20 men at various stands along the route, the total number depending on the dictates of the American Federation of Musicians. The show's management, having enough of that kind of business, discarded the old arrangement which had been in effect since 1956 and both units went out in 1977 with permanent 15 piece bands, musicians being contracted for through Cas-Pet of Yonkers, N.Y. The AFL-CIO got into the matter early and threatened a boycott of Ringling dates but after negotiations of several weeks a satisfactory settlement was reached on June 7. The new contract provided that the show would carry 5 permanent musicians and would hire an additional 10 local men at each stand.

The show's tax dispute with the Sarasota County appraisers was still in the news, the argument being that the show didn't feel it should have to pay property taxes on the trains and props which stay in Venice only a few weeks a year. In January a suit was filed against the local tax officials to head off the assessment. According to the Ringling management it would cost the show an additional 43 G's each year in local property taxes unless they got relief from the court. The matter still hadn't been settled by the end of the year.

The long rumored Ringling-Barnum "third unit" finally made its appearance in 1977 but it turned out to be nothing like the show which the rumor mongers had predicted. It wasn't under canvas, wasn't titled Hagenbeck-Wallace, wasn't a smaller version of the two larger shows framed to play in less populated cities. It



turned out to be the Ringling-Barnum Thrill Circus and geared to play in front of grandstands at fairs or other celebrations. The so called third unit made its debut at the Ohio State Fair in Columbus, August 22-28. A special litho and window card were designed for the event and the performance consisted primarily of aerial acts which were more suitable for outdoor viewing than inside. Upon conclusion of the initial stand of the Thrill Circus, Irvin Feld was quoted, "There's no question about it. Now, we're in the fair business". Additional dates could be expected in the future but the Columbus showing was the only one in 1977.

Mary Gill, aerialist, who was injured while performing with one of the Ringling units in 1973 when a trapeze platform gave way, was awarded \$1.725 million in Federal Court where she had sued for careless and negligent operation of the rigging of the trapeze.

During the year Ringling-Barnum dropped its 6 year suit of one million dollars against Monty Montana, Jr. over the latter's use of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show title for a satisfactory out of court settlement. Terms reportedly were that Monty could use the title anywhere except within the State of Florida and Ringling retained the rights for limited use of the title in circus productions. Montana got full rights for use in connection with any conventional wild west show operation and he indicated that in addition to operating a summer attraction at North Platte, Nebraska, using the Bill title he would also field a unit to play fairs.

The Ringling-Barnum Thrill Circus made one stand at the Ohio State Fair, Columbus, in 1977. The Wallendas are shown with the Hugo Zacchini cannon in the background. Pfening photo.

Following Ringling Red's close of the season Dec. 4 at Nassau, N.J., Allen Bloom told the press, "It's the biggest show we've ever had in terms of gross and attendance."

Hubert Castle's International Circus which over the years had built a solid route of strong indoor stands played out its usual tour in the U.S. and Canada. Two members of the Rodriguez Troupe were injured when the net they were standing on gave way and they fell to the arena floor, November 2, in Kansas City, Mo. Castle operated two units during the winter season.

Royal Hanneford Circus, operated by Tommy Hanneford, opened early in the year playing a number of college coliseums plus several Shrine dates. In February the show got caught in a blizzard while enroute to White Plains, N.Y. The coldest winter on record hurt the routing of many shows during the early weeks of the season. Later in the year the Tommy Hanneford Aerial Thrill Circus debuted during the Aug. 25-Sept. 5 Minnesota State Fair in Minneapolis. The performance was given as a free show attraction in the open air in front of bleachers erected for spectators. The Hanneford show using this format played 9 weeks in the fall, many at other fairs, and some at Shrine sponsored shows.

Ian Garden and his Toronto based

Garden Bros. Circus combined with John Cuneo's Hawthorne Circus Corporation animals and acts and picked up a number of lucrative stands in the United States. One such date was the annual Yaarab Shrine Temple circus in Atlanta which had long been held by Clyde Bros.

Polack Bros. ownership changed hands twice during the season. It was purchased from Louis Stern on January 3 by Larry Davis, Bobby Cohn, and Parley Baer for reportedly, 100 G's, the price covering all equipment, animals, rolling stock etc. The newly owned show was billed as the Original Polack Bros. America's Finest Circus and opening stand was in Flint, Mich., where the take was about 18 percent higher than a year ago. As mentioned before Bill Stebbing bought the Polack show on July 8 and said it would now be based in Sarasota, Fla. Animals coming in the purchase included 4 elephants. The late Irvin Polack, founder of Polack Bros., used the title as early as 1911 and the new owners prided themselves as now fielding the "Original" Polack Bros. This was no doubt to distinguish the show from the Sam T. Polack circus

The Beatty-Cole Circus introduced fresh newspaper ads for their new format of shopping center stands. This ad was used for the Voorhees, N.J. stand June 16-19. Bill Elbern Collection.

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which played a number of dates in 1977, some indoor, and others under canvas, using a blue and white big top from Florida Tent Rental Co. One such date was at Mt. Clemens, Mich., June 4-5.

Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus was another show which played several other canvas stands, including Brentwood, N.J., August 30-Sept. 5.

One of the first indoor shows to get rolling each new season was the Cole All Star TV Circus, owned and operated by veteran circus man, James M. "Jimmy" Cole, Jr., who was in his 60th year in show business. Cole opened his show, playing mainly school auditoriums, in January in the New York and Pennsylvania area but the winter became so intense he was forced to soon close down for 3 weeks

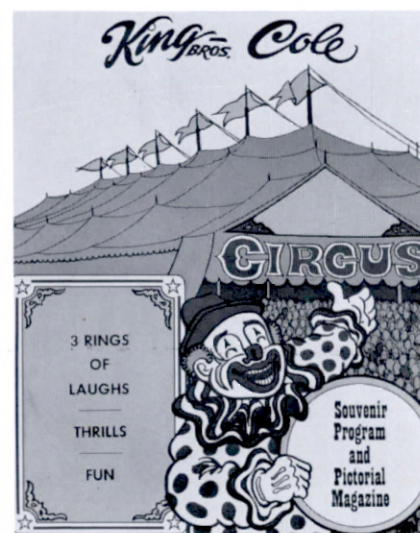
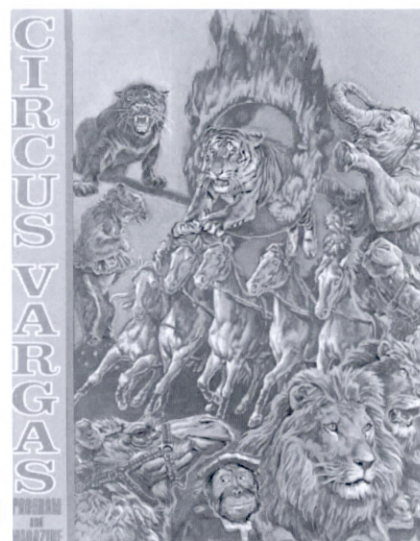
during the worst of it before resuming the tour.

For the past several years more and more circuses were playing fairs in the summer and fall. Some dates saw the regular grandstand being used, others were engagements in which special seating was erected. Paul Kaye's International Thrill Circus played the Los Angeles County Fair at Pomona, Calif., as a free grandstand attraction, Sept. 2-9, to great success. Eddie Zacchini's Olympic International Circus, in addition to making several indoor Shrine stands, also played a number of outdoor fair dates in the fall.

The Gatti-Charles Circus with a strong performance opened at El Paso, Texas, March 11, and made a full season. Hamid-Morton, who's title goes back to the 1920's and was one of




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the pioneer indoor circuses in the country, advertised that all but 3 of its acts were "All American" performers. For several years there had been a growing resentment over the wholesale use of European performers, many from Communist dominated countries, in some circuses. A number of shows were stressing the fact that they employed home grown performers.

Carden-Johnson-Clyde Bros. Combined fielded two units, Red and Blue, to handle its large number of dates, many of them for Shrine organizations.

International All Star Circus, owned by Jim Nordmark, had a good performance, small enough to play high school gyms, auditoriums, and recreational halls, and featured a fine five piece band. The show opened early in the year in Florida and played many stands in the south both in the spring and fall. There were several styles of half-sheet lithos with date tails put up by the show and the billing was on the order of an under canvas circus.

The TNT and Royal Olympic Circus had a long route. It was at Westminster, Calif., Feb. 16-20, then played through a wide area throughout the country. The show had a very attractive advertising courier.


Hubler's International Circus, owned by George Hubler, in addition to its route of indoor dates, played in the open as a free grandstand show at the La Porte, Indiana, County Fair.

Voorheis Bros., owned by Bill Voorheis, which played a number of indoor dates in Michigan, later went out for six weeks under canvas in the

Monte Montana's Buffalo Bill Wild West Show played the Broadbent Arena in Louisville, Ky. in 1977. Bill Rhodes photo.

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summer. It was billed as "Col. Bill's Grande Early American Circus" and had a green and yellow 45 x 80 big top. At its July 25-26 stand at Port Huron, Mich., it faced opposition from Hagan-Wallace-Sells & Gray which posted "Wait" paper for its stand in the same town on July 29.

Circus Odyssey, produced by Ed Migley, had a successful tour of Puerto Rico during the early weeks of the year. When it ended on April 3 the show was then moved to Rhode Island for stands at Kingston and Providence.

Van Bros., owned by Joe King, opened the latter part of June and played several weeks of outdoor dates using a canvas sidewall.

Otto Berosini put his Circus Berosini at the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota as the summer attraction after George Hanneford's contract was concluded. Berosini later found himself in trouble when the local Equine Rescue Service charged that on July 25 he cruelly and unnecessarily



ly beat a llama, one of his animals, and a criminal indictment was placed against him. At the trial held some weeks later a jury in 20 minutes found him innocent. He had earlier been cleared in a civil case of animal cruelty. During his difficulties his animals had been impounded. Later in the year Berosini indicated he might file suit for damages against the Equine Rescue Service for false accusations.

The several somewhat unusual circuses touring in 1977 included the Royal Lichtenstein Circus operated by Nick Weber of San Jose, Calif. The show prided itself as a one truck, sidewalk type, circus. It played a string of school dates moving as far eastward as Georgia by fall. Another interesting show was the Pickle Family Circus, now in its third season. Its performance was presented in one ring using a red, yellow, and blue sidewall. The show played dates in northern California and Oregon and closed for the season after its stand in Sacramento, August 20-21.

The circuses in 1977 had advertising policies as varied as the many other differences mentioned earlier. Carson & Barnes used rural delivery heralds on the order of shows a half century ago. The two smaller shows in the Acme fold, King and Sells and Gray, continued to post a moderate amount of posters and window cards, almost



The Famous Hunt's Circus again toured New England in 1977. Paul Horsman photo.

all of them inside store windows, with some on utility poles, but the old outdoor type daub had for all practical purposes gone the way of the singing clown. Beatty-Cole severely restricted its use of billing paper. The two Ringling-Barnum units, although not using any regular posters, except in the windows of certain promotional outlets, did use a number of regular 24 sheet outdoor billboards with the standard design of the particular performance edition. Practically the only firm still supplying a large amount of billing paper to shows was *Enquirer* and some of their stock designs could be spotted on as many as three or four different shows. Ringling-Barnum had several excellent TV commercials all replete with traditional circus type music

which, much to the disappointment of the Windjammers membership and other circus music lovers, still was missing from the regular circus performance itself. The circus music buffs were happy, however, that three major circus bands played the type of music to their liking, Charles Bertini with Beatty-Cole, Jim Gibson on Vargas, and Percy Johnson with Carson & Barnes. All of these bands drew plaudits throughout the season.

The Moscow Circus opened its several weeks tour of the country in Chicago with a Nov. 10-13 engagement. The show later claimed attendance of 56,392 at the Spectrum in Philadelphia during its stand, Nov. 30-Dec. 4.

Deaths of prominent circus personalities, during 1977 included Raymond Duke, J.A. (Chief Joseph) Hofmeister, Jack Joyce, Alfred Court, William Heyer, William Olnier, Edna Curtis Christiansen, John Hartzell, Sr., Carl "Swede" Johnson, Hugo Schmidt, Maria Rasputin Bern, Herman J. Linden, Mel Olsen, and Don Smith.

The *Bandwagon* staff wishes to thank the many individuals who contributed information or photographs to be used in this season review. Especially helpful were Don Marcks, Bill Elbirn, Paul Horsman, Ron Sanford, and Bill Rhodes.

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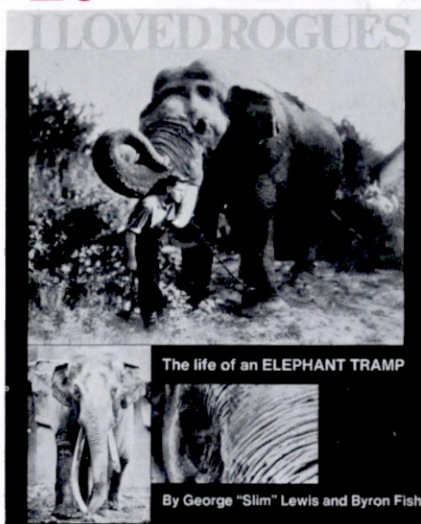
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